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SERMONS

ON

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

AND

TITLES OF CHRIST.

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PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF DUNOON,

BY

M. MACKAY, LL. D.

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THIS volume owes its publication chiefly to the solicitations of friends. The Sermons were written amidst the labour and difficulty of numerous official duties in an extensive and populous parish; and certainly under no impression of their ever appearing in this form. The Author feels, that to make Divine Truth manifest to the understanding and conscience, is an appointed end of preaching; and he seeks to pursue it. Should that end be attained in the experience of any, by means of this volume, he will have cause of thankfulness and rejoicing.

MANSE, DUNOON,
November 27th, 1835.

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—— 64, line 3 from foot, *for* upon as righteous, *read* upon you as righteous.
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SERMON I.

EPHES. vi. 14, first clause.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.

THE inspired writer of this epistle calls those whom he addresses to the exercise of many duties pertaining to the Christian life. While he does this, he also warns them of the difficulties they must meet with, and against which they must have to contend. He instructs them, that, in entering on the Christian life,—awakened to its importance, to the solemnity of its cares, the dignity of its nature, and the glory and excellency of its object and end, they are not, by such awakening, to be freed from embarrassments and trials; but on the contrary, that the life communicated to their souls, through grace, being a new life, (as he informs them at the beginning of the second chapter,) there must be new difficulties and trials and hardships incident to it, which they must encounter. And in our more immediate context now read in

your hearing, he brings before them, by a most explicit and impressive declaration, that, as it is a spiritual, not a natural life, so they are spiritual difficulties which they will have to meet with and to overcome; in other words, they have to meet with spiritual enemies, and these are of such a character and description, that their Christian course is declared at once to be a life of actual warfare. We are not to suppose, that it is in figure or simile the apostle here speaks, when mentioning, and impressing upon those whom he so earnestly addresses, the enemies with whom they have to contend. Those enemies, though not of a corporeal kind, are real,—they have an actual existence. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle *not* against *flesh* and *blood*, but against principalities and powers,—against the rulers of the darkness of this world,—against spiritual wickedness in high places." All those conversant with the pursuits and employments of the life that now is, confess from experience, that there are trials and difficulties continually to be met with, from the very circumstances and nature of the diversified pursuits in which they are engaged; all these tend often to vex, and weary, and harass both the outward and the inner man,—both the body and mind. But while the mind continues insensible of its own

spiritual interests,—of its eternal destiny and prospects; the enemies of the soul are neither known nor discerned, and the very existence of such enemies at all, comes to be questioned or doubted. To answer such questions, or to solve such doubts, is not the object of our present address. And if you be in our hearing who experience them, we would just offer you a brief and practical remedy for them all. Just attend more to spiritual things than you now do;—consider your connexion with eternal objects, and the state of your soul with God;—make that the special pursuit of your mind—your actual business; and then, you will soon learn the truth of the apostle's declaration which we have now quoted. And till then, we hold you no judges in this matter at all. Would you consent to receive advice, and lecture, and guidance in your special pursuits of life, and in the difficulties attendant upon them, from us, who are much less experienced than yourselves, in your details of business, or in the intricacies of your avocations and cares? We would assuredly feel our own incompetency to the task; and it would be but bare candour in *us*, nay, necessity would impose it upon us, to confess our practical ignorance of your special professions and business:—we are not taught or versed in the matter. And, in like manner, whoever you be who have not made yet the soul your special care, and its

salvation your anxious object; how can you know the enemies of the soul, or the difficulties and hardships and trials of the Christian and spiritual warfare? It is true, nor have we any wish to deny it, that several of the duties mentioned in this chapter, unto which Christians are called, may be observed and performed in such manner and measure as to win the approbation of men, by many individuals who are altogether strangers to spiritual and Christian motives; and in such performance of such duties, they do not feel or experience the hinderances or obstacles of which the apostle speaks in our context. For instance, children without faith, without any awakening or quickening into spiritual life, may obey their parents, and act dutifully towards them; and, in like manner, parents who are in every respect actually unbelievers, may act with kindness and much patience and affection towards their children; servants without faith, or spiritual life, may act with natural honesty and faithfulness towards their masters; and masters may do the same things unto them also, forbearing threatening, without any one movement of Christian principle being ever experienced by them in all this. Now, in such a course of conduct, and we deny not to it its own due tribute of respect, there is no experience had of the Christian's difficulties and toils. But observe, that in all such conduct, on the part of any

individual who has not supreme regard in all this to his relation with God, and to the authority and will of God, there is wanting still, the very principle to which God looks, and which, in fact, constitutes the very essence, if we may so speak, of spiritual life; so that it cannot be expected the enemies of the soul will seek, so much at least, to interrupt the currency of such doings. The principle we speak of, as constituting the essence of spiritual life, the very well-spring of every true Christian duty, is Faith in God,—a practical and habitual recognition of *Him*, in conduct, and a filial desire to glorify His name. That this is necessary, as the very vital part of the duty, is very obvious surely, in all the apostle's counsels given in this chapter. Children are commanded not only to obey their parents, but to obey them *in the Lord*, and in practical respect to the commandment and promise of God, which is here quoted. Parents, with regard to children, must have it as their special care, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants are not only to obey their masters, but to do so with singleness of heart, as unto Christ, with good-will, doing service *as to the Lord*, and not to men. And masters must act not only with kindness and forbearance towards them, but in the habitual remembrance that *their* Master is also in heaven, and in the habitual feeling, that with *Him*

there is no respect of persons. Now, without stopping here to demonstrate, that duties performed from no living or true principle of faith in God cannot be acceptable in His sight, however good and amiable they may be in the sight of men, and profitable to the well-being temporally of society at large; we would just advert to one objection, which we doubt not may be urged by some in their own defence, namely, that they never doubted their own faith in God; that surely, then, those duties, and all other relative ones, are performed by them in the proper temper and spirit of the Christian life. But, my friends, this negative sort of faith is not the necessary and saving belief in God of which we speak, and to the necessity of which the whole Scripture bears ample testimony. True and influential faith in God is a living, and not a dead, inactive principle, and its character and tendency are, to make the mind continually or habitually alive to God—remembering, honouring, reverencing *Him* in all the actual doings, and from its very strength and power in the heart—from the very light, and revelation, and knowledge of God which it brings, inclining you, and exciting you, and directing you, willingly and earnestly to do all things as to *Him*, and not unto men. Without this habitual influence being experienced by you, in your actual conduct, throughout your various relations

and duties of life, you have no evidence, no *sure* sign or mark of your being truly believers in God. And as this true influential faith or belief is the very beginning of true spiritual life in the soul; so it is, when this is begun or established in any effectual measure, that the difficulties and hardships peculiar to the Christian life will come to be experienced. And our next step of a practical demonstration, to bring before you the importance of the counsel in our text, may appear to some a contradiction in terms; yet its truth must be known and felt by every practical Christian; namely, that the very beginning of this true faith, or belief in God, is an actual experience on the part of the individual of his really being destitute of such a faith in God. He feels the difficulty of carrying it along with him into the actual business and engagements of life—the difficulty there is of a true, and clear, and distinct knowledge, and remembrance, and recognition of God being habitually upheld in the mind, and having it as the presiding and ruling power within him. He begins to feel that there are other passions, and affections, and moving principles within the mind, the continual tendency of which is, to efface from the soul, practically, every remembrance of God, and to lead him forward in a practical course of denying God in all his thoughts, and in all his pursuits and conduct. Every object,

every pursuit, every enjoyment pertaining to time and to sense appears to him now as possessing a power, which would banish from the mind the true remembrance of God; and not only this, but there are experienced feelings, and tendencies, and evil affections within his own breast, which side with this power in things external, which enter as if into coalition and league with those lords which have had, and which still exercise dominion over him; yea, of the two, that his worst enemies are those of his own mental household—that these are the enemies of the true remembrance and the true obedience of God in the practical life. Now, this experienced estimate of the matter is the true and correct one; and those obstacles together, both from without and within, are the very spiritual wickednesses in high places—the very wiles of the devil, against which the believer must strive and contend, even until through divine grace he obtain the victory over them.

You are not all ignorant, that there are interpreters of Scripture who would argue, that, by the statements of our context, are meant other powers and principalities far—the individuals of this world's polities, who, at the period of the apostle's address to the Ephesians, exercised tyranny, and devised persecutions against the people of God externally in their temporal lot and well-being. But such construction of the words of our context does ab-

solute violence to every received and constituted rule, even of fair and common sense reasoning. The whole testimony of Scripture is on our side, in maintaining the existence and power of the spiritual enemies of the soul,—that the great enemy of God and man did obtain ascendency over our race, and that his destructive power is maintained and exercised over every unbelieving soul of man, by his having implanted in our mental constitution and frame those evil and rebellious affections, and feelings, and movements of mind against the knowledge, and obedience, and love of God, which every rational being may but too abundantly experience in themselves, when once the testimony and revelation of God come home to the understanding, and conscience, and heart—when the mind is turned to study and consider them practically, and when any new desires are implanted there to seek the rendering of obedience unto them. It is these evils in ourselves, and the power of the adversary of God and men, working by them, against the good, the interests, the salvation of the soul, which render the Christian life a scene of continued warfare and contest. And the grace of God manifested in the covenant of redemption, and through Jesus Christ its Mediator and living Head, is abundant and precious, especially in that, if the powers and principalities opposed to the believer's true in-

terests be strong and powerful, there are provided for him abundant resources, wherewith to maintain the warfare, until the victory be obtained. In ourselves we have no spiritual strength adequate to the carrying forward of this warfare; our enemies are those especially which are established in the very faculties of our being by the adversary of our souls, our very nature is taken captive by his wiles, and rendered thereby disobedient to God, and hostile at once to the cause of his glory, and to the soul's own eternal well-being: and therefore the means of our defence and security, and eventual triumph, are well denominated the armour of God, and not ours. But though God's, it is offered freely and abundantly to us, that we may put on the whole of it. And the words of our text represent the individual soul as having, implanted in it, or begun to be established in it, true faith in God, and the consequent desires of serving, obeying, and glorifying Him in all things; and the experience also begun to be realized, which we have been endeavouring now to describe—that the enemies of the soul, and of those newly implanted desires, and motives, and purposes, are numerous, and strong, and powerful in their actings against the soul. "*Stand*, therefore," say the words of our text, as if seizing upon the actual experience of the soul so situated,—give not way to the power of evil

which worketh in you by nature; fall not away from your purposed and desired obedience to God —rebel not against His call and invitation to follow Him, by yielding to the evils within yourselves, or in the world around you, which would withdraw you from the service and obedience of God and your Saviour. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."

We would here farther observe, that though there be actually no figurative language employed by the inspired writer, in describing the actual enemies of the soul in our context, the language passes into the figurative style, when he comes to describe the *mode* of Christian warfare against those enemies; and this for the purpose, not of weakening our impressions of its reality, but for the purpose of bringing still more vividly and clearly before us the true business matters of practical godliness. The figure employed in the words of our text, is accordingly a most significant one. It obviously has reference to the usual mode of clothing, and of the use of armour also, known among the people whom the apostle addresses. "Having your loins girt about," bears an allusion to a principal and essential part of the dress usually worn by the people here addressed, and by most of the ancient nations, both in the occupations of peace and of warfare. The cincture, or girdle, or belt, was used to retain

around the body, both for convenience and comfort, and comeliness, the flowing robes of which the dress was principally composed. This girdle, as might be shewn from numerous passages of scripture, was a part of the dress, both from its necessity and convenience, which attracted special attention and regard. Encompassing the loins or waist, it had three special uses;—it restrained the flowing robe, making it to minister to convenience and freedom of bodily movements;—it was also supposed to give additional firmness and strength to the person; and on it frequently hung suspended certain of the arms used in warfare. Without it, the whole clothing would be only an incumbrance, and every bodily movement or exercise would be continually impeded. Now, what this necessary portion of dress was to the body, our text states, that Truth must be to the mind and soul of the Christian.

Truth, indeed, is a word of extensive signification. But we need not go about to establish here the compass of its meaning. It must signify here undoubtedly the truths of God, the truths concerning *Him*, made known in the revelation which He makes of Himself, to a lost and perishing world. And together with this, we may hold our text safely, as bearing a clear reference to the practical virtue of truth being held and observed in all things by the Christian, in all his practical

duties and doings, both with regard to God and to men.

It signifies first, then, those all-important truths which God has made known to man regarding Himself,—His being, and character, and will, and the relation in which we personally stand to Him as His rational, and accountable, and sinful creatures. The greatest and most important of all truths is, that God is. "I am," is the declaration of God: and "Thou art," must be the constant feeling and the habitual view of the true and practical Christian. This may be called by some a very insignificant and common attainment. It is not, however, so common: we believe it is rare. We mean not here the assenting to the truth that God is, the impossibility of even denying it to the rational mind:—but we mean the constant, habitual sense and feeling of it being present to the mind, in all the actual goings and doings of the individual. This is, indeed, both the duty and privilege of the true believer, and that which, when kept in exercise, is the true strength of his mind and soul. Few there are who will not make the confession readily, that God is; but alas, few also are there, we fear, who feel and exercise true belief of this truth constantly, and who have it operative and influential in their mind's consciousness and regards. It must not only be a belief, as the term is commonly understood, which the Christian re-

quires to have regarding God, but *such* a belief as will keep God ever before him, the distinct object of his recognition, and reverence, and godly fear and love. With those who do not truly believe the admission alone may satisfy;—but with the true Christian it must be experienced as an attainment far and utterly beyond his own natural strength, and contrary to the natural tendencies of his alienated mind, to bear this in constant, and lively, and impressive remembrance. We would here observe, that having the loins girt about with truth, must imply in parity of reason, according to the figure of speech employed in our text, the close application of the truth to the perceptions, and feelings, and consciousness of the mind; and in such a manner that the mind habitually feels and owns the solemnity and importance, and recognises the value, of the truth represented and actually believed. We might here, indeed, enlarge upon the significancy of the figure employed in our text; but we would just remark how forcibly our text condemns the resting satisfied with a speculative belief of the truth. The girdle or belt of the ancients was a part of their dress, which from its important use came to be regarded with special attention and care. Much pains were often bestowed upon ornamenting it, and making it worthy of admiration from others. But having it thus in possession, and laying it up as a valued

piece of dress and ornament, was entirely a different thing from girding it on, and applying it to its proper use. But in our text, its practical and habitual use is the very duty enjoined;—and let those who hold the very truth we have spoken of, —the existence or being of God, not in use, but in theory and in mere speculation;—O! let *them* remember that this is but as the making or purchasing of the costly girdle, precious indeed and beautiful in itself, but of no use to *you*, while the loins of your mind are not continually girt about with it, for the end and purposes to which it is spiritually intended and useful. And we would just return, and put it to you individually, whether the one truth we have mentioned be habitually present with you? And if the Christian complain of deadness and languor of mind, and of slothfulness in the duties which pertain to his spiritual well-being, remember, we intreat you, how you come short in the duty commanded in our text,— and how the very remembrance and recognition of the being or existence, or character of God, is blotted out from your mind, by the constant recurrence of indeed every other care and pursuit, or object of vanity, which finds so readily a place in all your regards. And however imperceptibly this may come upon you, the forgetfulness of God,—be assured it comes not without a certain process being gone through in your mind's actual

history;—and that process is, the power of your spiritual enemy working in you, through the means of some earthly vanity, some fleeting shadow of fancied happiness, or of fretting care, which is made to you to appear by "the rulers of the darkness of this world," to be real and substantial, and transcendently important, when it is only but lighter than air in itself, compared with the things of God and eternity; and when it is, moreover, the means of bringing lethargy or death to any spiritual understanding or desire which may have been bestowed upon you by the goodness and grace of God, through Jesus Christ. And we would counsel you not to rest satisfied with the occasional checking and reproving of your own mind, when you feel that you have been again unmindful of God; but to view the matter as that which specially concerns the best interests of your soul, and to be earnest with God, that He would, according to the riches of His grace in Christ, bestow upon you continually, power to exercise a living sense of His own existence and being. And seek not to call up by your own strength, as if you could find it within you, to realize again, in a true and spiritual, and increasing manner, the girding of the loins of your mind with the greatest of truths, the being and existence of God; for such a returning and shallow belief will, soon as ever, again die away with-

in you: but the labour you bestow in seeking it within the rebellious household of your own mind, O bestow it, and bestow it more abundantly, in seeking this true faith, or practical and impressive belief of the truth from God Himself, who will give it abundantly, and who commands you earnestly to contend for it. And simple and insignificant as the matter may appear unto others, the Christian may well feel, that nothing short of the mighty and gracious power of God can so establish this faith practically and influentially in the soul, as to make it ever to be present there, and there to bear the habitual fruit of true reverence, and love, and obedience to God. That your loins then may be girt about with this truth, come to God, seeking to receive it as his own gift of grace.

But next to the truth that God is, the most important must be, what God is: in other words, the character of God must be recognised as well as the being of God. And it is in entering upon this part of our subject that a wide and important field of observation and counsel is presented before us. Into its length and breadth we cannot venture now to go. The character of God is manifested by His declarations and doings; and these are recorded in His own word. That word, then, being itself the truth, is the field upon which your minds must enter, to learn the character of

God. And it is by that word being carried home to your heart and whole mind in power and in demonstration from above, that the counsel of our text will come to be fulfilled and obeyed in your personal experience. And just as that portion of ancient dress to which the figure in our text refers, was composed, and made strong by the joining and weaving together into one texture of many filaments, each one strong in itself, and the one strengthening the other, so the girding about of the Christian's mind must be the perception, the believing, the receiving of those evidences which are given of the character and will of God in the wondrous doings which His holy word records to us. We would not be understood as if undervaluing in their place the evidences which are presented to us of the character of God in the works of creation around us. But of themselves these are not sufficient to gird the mind in spiritual strength to the actual performance of spiritual duties. We know not of any one instance in which such effect has been ever produced in one individual of those who studied them most, and who did not also receive the testimony of God's word in the scriptures of truth. It is in the word of God that those doings and counsels of His are made known, which point out and constitute the way of the sinner's return to God, and which shew to the sinner his own per-

sonal need of being so turned *unto* Him. Those truths which the word of God testifies and shows must be habitually recognised and cherished by the mind, else the knowledge of God will not prevail there; and where knowledge of Him abounds not, obedience unto Him will not follow; nay, there will not follow any true or active desire of obedience. And it is when the character of God is made manifest to the soul, by the testimony of God's law, and of his glorious gospel coming unto the mind in power, that there will follow those convictions of your need of His grace, those views of its abundance and richness in Christ Jesus, as will incline the mind both to reverence, and to love, and to serve the Lord in newness of life. It is then, truly, that the importance and reality of spiritual things will so appear to the soul in their true and proper light, as to cause it stand opposed to the power of evil and of vanity, which formerly had free course in the mind's habits, and in the personal conduct. But it is not those evidences concerning God being literally understood by you merely which can ever produce this blessed effect. It is the persuasion and conviction of their truth which will do it. This undoubtedly comes through knowledge of them, when that knowledge is sanctified, and made effectual in the soul, by a power that is from God. As a God in Christ He is manifested,

holy, and just, and true; merciful and gracious, and willing to reconcile us to Himself, and to bestow upon us all the benefits and privileges of his own children. The truths of God, then, as they are manifested through Christ in his person, and doctrines, and doings, and sufferings, must become to the mind the elements of its spiritual capacity to resist the power and prevalence of iniquity. This believing view and reception of the great doctrines and truths of God must be upheld, therefore, in the mind; and this must be produced by the continued teaching and witnessing of the Spirit of God to the heart and conscience. This will produce in the soul that consciousness of those doctrines being actually *the truth*, which will make the soul to address itself seriously and solemnly to the great duties of the Christian life, in warring against sin, and in striving to perfect holiness in the fear of God. This consciousness and felt persuasion of the truth is that which gives consistency to the mind's habits, and which will render the outward and personal conduct such as becomes godliness in the soul. You have your loins girt about with truth just in proportion as you realize this feeling of the truth, and then difficulties and temptations may come in your way, but your steps will be upheld in uprightness before God and men. It is indeed of God to work this persuasion and blessed con-

sciousness of truth in your hearts. And when you feel that it is not sufficiently wrought in you —that the truths of God's word fall but as a dead letter, and as mere sound on your mind—when you feel that they bring not before you habitually the character and will of God, O then apply to God Himself for the promised power of the Spirit to come to you, that the word might dwell in you abundantly—that its testimony might keep before you the great end of your calling—the glorious realities of the kingdom of heaven—and the character especially of God in Christ, providing and freely offering unto you your everlasting inheritance and portion in that kingdom. And with these things in your view, you will feel more and more impressively the necessity there is to you of your being conformed in heart and mind to the will and to the image of God; and then will you be willing and prepared to resist sin, knowing its evil, its hatefulness to God, its rebelliousness against *Him*, its danger to your own soul's well-being. It will thus begin and continue to die within you, as to its original and actual ruling power. And be assured, that it is by your *feeling* the truth of the gospel's *doctrines*—of the whole word of God, you will come also to have the precepts of that word continually held in reverence and regard. You will come to delight in the law of God after the inner man, and its

precepts will be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path, your song in the house of your pilgrimage here, when in enlightened consciousness of their truth as emanating from God, displaying his character and will, and his purposes of love regarding you, you once have your loins girt about with them. And the counsel of our text will then indeed receive its due obedience, when thus exercised in mind, in whatever outward circumstances the true Christian is placed, with whatever difficulties, and embarrassments, and temptations his path may be surrounded, the truths of God, shedding light into his mind, will guide his goings; and there *can* be no circumstance whatever in which you *can* be placed, but there are in the word and counsel of God direction and encouragement appropriate to your case; and in all your seasons of need, then, your safety will be sure, by your coming in faith, even striving to exercise faith in God, and your seeking that he would, by his good Spirit, apply his own word to your conscience and heart. And if there be one counsel regarding your daily and habitual goings more necessary than another with regard to the doctrine of our text, it is, the necessity there is to you of your continually having the word of God present with you, in every duty, and in every avocation, as your authority and warrant from God Himself. When your reso-

lutions, and purposes, and intentions are not founded upon that word of His, then you cannot expect that your goings can be upheld or established, or that your undertakings are blest. But walking in this light and persuasion of the truth, you will be strong in spiritual and moral understanding and courage, to contend even with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. And what an illustrious example of this is set before the believer, in the character and conduct of Christ! When exposed to the tempter's power, and wiles, and suggestions of malice, we hear the Saviour meeting them with this language, "It is written," —God hath spoken it, and therefore it shall and must hold true. And why did He, who was and is Himself the truth,—the author of all truth revealed to us, leave us this example, but that believers should be followers of it? He needed not the authority of the word to support Him, as God, against the wiles of the devil, for he had almighty power; but as God manifested in the flesh, the great prophet and pattern of His church upon earth, He laid hold of the truth, that we might go and do likewise.

But we proposed also to show, how the precept and counsel of our text are addressed to us, as a warning and voice of guidance, that we should cultivate the practical virtue of truth in

all things. The cultivation of this virtue is enjoined by every sound moral consideration. It is one of the virtues of ordinary life, on the exercise of which, by each and every individual, is suspended the happiness and well-being of this world's society itself. Let it depart from the communings and intercourse of men, and what are the evils that will not follow? Its importance is universally recognised, but its observance, alas! is not so universally practised. Let each one examine their own hearts; and will you not confess, that there are with you numerous passions and feelings excited by various causes of interest, supposed at least to be so, of vanity, and blindness of self-love, which tend almost habitually to turn you away from a rigid adherence to truth? And this virtue of the practical life has this peculiarity, that you cannot deviate from it, without a consciousness at the very moment of the violation committed. This, to the God of truth, is a heinous offence, however lightly it may be esteemed by those who make a mock at sin; and, from those numerous violations of truth with which the world is filled, and which are committed by conscious acts of the individual, numerous evils, which turn the scenes of life into constant bitterness, may be traced. Yet, my friends, will mere moral considerations, and speculative theories, and lofty and fair descriptions of the

beauty of truth,—will all these enforce its practical observance? Alas, no! until the evil affections and passions of men be restrained by a higher authority, and the mind subdued and disciplined into a submission to the sacred, and solemn, and all-important truths of God, as revealed to us in His own word. The holding of the truth as it is in Jesus, by which God is recognised, and loved, and honoured, can alone induce into the practical conduct, a careful and rigid observance of truth between man and man, in the intercourse, and business, and varied and minute offices and duties of life. How clearly this is insisted upon in the gospel of Christ, as a special and primary duty, we need not describe to those who at all are conversant with its recorded statements. "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." That is the injunction and commandment of Christ, confirming, and seeking to show forth in the practice and character of His people a constant honouring of the eternal and unchangeable commandment of God, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour;" and the apostle, in a chapter preceding that whence our text is taken, has this injunction, "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." Now, we again

aver, that men *will* continue to violate this holy and salutary precept, until taught of God to hold, in a believing heart and good conscience, the truths and doctrines of the revealed word,—those attracting them to the love and obedience of God. Motives of interest, and reputation, and honour in the world, may indeed enforce or induce into the practical habits of life general regard to truth in worldly dealings; but in more ordinary, and minute, and private intercourse, it may be but habitually disowned, where it can be done with impunity. But if wilfully violated at all, or in habit, however trivial such deviations appear to the unenlightened conscience, and even to the world around us, the sin is heinous in the sight of God; and to turn from such, wholly, unto the observance of truth in all things, is one of those fruits meet for repentance, enjoined in the gospel; and if this be not made conscience of, and that minutely, carefully, and habitually, be your profession what it may, or your knowledge, in theory, of the truth, what it may, be assured, that you harbour and cherish a sin which is hateful to God and ruinous to your soul; it is specially ruinous in hardening the heart, and in defiling the inner man, and it prevents your having freedom of access to God; for while you regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you. It is a sin which cannot dwell together

with the exercise of faith in the soul. Therefore, if you wish to have your loins girt about with truth, make conscience of truth; and let the light of the knowledge of God so shine in your mind, that this evil may not dwell with it; and the faithful observance of the truth will establish your mind more and more in the love of it: and even in the presence of men, whatever immediate results may follow from your observance of this sacred and solemn duty, it will constrain them to acknowledge your uprightness. And this leads me, in conclusion, to bring before you, and to impress upon you individually, the consideration of preserving truth in your profession of godliness, not in the sight of men only, but in the sight of God. Does not every duty of the Christian life which you go about, imply a certain amount of perception and feeling of the truth as revealed from God in the scriptures? In your religious duties, are you not saying to God, that such and such are the desires and purposes of your soul? And if form and show of devotion precede and surpass your actual feelings and purposes which you speak of, can this be but hateful to the God of truth; and how can it appear to Him but as falsehood, and mockery and defiance of His holiness and omniscience, and of His own eternal love of the truth? "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou desirest truth in the inward

parts." And, O! remember, that of all duties, this belongs, as much as to any,—if it were possible, we would say, it most specially belonged to your solemn approaches to God in prayer, and in your secret prayers. You put up certain petitions to God,—are these from the heart? And if not from its very inward parts and feelings, from its desires and purposes within you, how can it be but as the prayer of the wicked, which is an abomination unto the Lord? And will *you* not confess, who seek to have the loins of your mind girt about with the truth, that you stand in need of constant watchfulness and jealousy over yourselves, lest formality assume the place of the truth, in your solemn approaches to God, and that language beyond your actual experience and feeling may come to be used. For your much speaking, your prayers shall not be heard or answered. Seek, first of all, faith in God, and the application of his truth to your conscience, manifesting unto you the wants of your soul; and whatever these may be which are thus made known to you, let them form the subject of your prayers to God. He hath given you indeed by Christ a rule for prayer. Are its petitions the true desires of your soul? If not, there are sins with you which prevent your having such desires; seek light with His truth from God, to make them known to you; and let the truth, your

own actual condition, and that of others, so far as known to you, form the subject of your earnest intreaties with Him; and see that He who is Himself the truth, be present to your mind, as your advocate and intercessor with God the Father; and then shall your prayers be heard, and you shall experience more and more of the truth in its power, should your prayer in faith be but only, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

SERMON II.

EPHES. vi. 14, last clause.

Having on the breastplate of righteousness.

IN already addressing you from the preceding clause of this verse, we endeavoured to bring before you the nature of the duty which it enjoins. We must remember that the special use of the armour of God here commended and offered to the believer, is, to defend the soul in its spiritual interests from the assaults of its spiritual enemies. And we have already been endeavouring to show, that those enemies are, in the first place, the devil, the author of all sin; and that the evil affections, and passions, and feelings, inherent in us by nature, are his work; and that, being in themselves active energies of the human mind, they are accounted, and spoken of here, as the enemies of the soul—as if, which indeed they are, the very emissaries and auxiliaries of Satan, they join in

league and bonds with *him* to destroy the soul, alluring and turning it away from God and from godliness: and these joining again and making alliance with the sinful and vain objects of time and of sense, which are also in a certain sense under the power of the adversary,—the soul of the believer, quickened though it be, into new and spiritual life, is surrounded with snares, and difficulties, and hardships, against which he has to contend; but over which, at length, the Lord will ensure him the victory. And hence, it is not enough that the believer have his loins girt about with truth, and be prepared to meet with his enemies in the contest, to hold his step firm and unencumbered, and the garment of his profession, in belief and experience of the truth, continually well secured to his soul; but he must further put on the armour of God, to enter into the very realities of this spiritual conflict;—and the next one of his defensive weapons is here commended and offered unto him, as provided by Christ his King and his Leader,—"the breastplate of righteousness." This term it falls to us now to explain, and to bring under your notice its importance in the actual business of true Christian conduct.

It is almost unnecessary to explain literally what is meant by a breastplate. When used as here to indicate a piece of defensive armour, it signi-

fies a plate or covering of metal, impervious to the ordinary weapons of attack, placed over the breast to defend that most vital part of the human frame. And as this was of signal use for safety to the warrior, the meaning of our text must be, that righteousness is of the same service to the soul, when put on as a part of the spiritual armour of God. Our explanation may then be confined to the term righteousness, and to the practical use of it which is here enjoined.

The term righteousness is of extensive signification in scripture language, and in the economy of grace. In the first place, it signifies an attribute of God's character, and is equivalent to what we mean when we speak of the justice of God in the administration of his moral government, and in all his dealings with his rational creatures; —that essential perfection in the nature of God, which disposes Him to give to all beings their due. In this sense, men cannot be said, in their fallen and lost estate, to have the righteousness of God established or exercised in their minds as a living principle, nor indeed have they even any semblance of it in the same manner as in the mind of God. But there *is* a sense in which the righteousness which is an essential perfection in the eternal and unchangeable character of God, becomes truly as a breastplate to the believer's soul; and to this we can, for method's sake, with more prop-

riety advert, when we have first spoken of some of the other significations which equally belong to the term, and in which it is obviously here intended to be understood. In the next place, this term signifies in the Gospel, the righteousness of Christ, that is, the full and perfect obedience which He, as the surety of sinners in the covenant of grace, gave to the whole law of God in His life upon earth, when He was manifested in the flesh, to fulfil the law in the room of sinners; and to endure the full penalty of a broken law, even the anger and wrath of God which were endured by Him in His body and soul,—the punishment of all those sins which His chosen people were seen of God to commit. This finished work of Christ, commonly distinguished by the two terms,—His active and passive obedience, constitute His righteousness in the capacity of mediator between God and man. Now, the abundant and glorious grace of the Gospel, is, that this righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer, in other words, to the sinner, whenever he believes in the offer of the Gospel, which testifies of this righteousness, and which conveys unto him the offer, pressing it upon his acceptance. The imputation to the believer of the righteousness of Christ absolves him from the sentence of God's condemnation,—from the sentence of eternal death;—his sins are pardoned, and he is held judicially, in the

sight of God, to be now righteous, in the same manner as if he himself had obeyed the law. But although, through the eternal grace and love of God to perishing sinners, this wonderful provision be made for them, it is another thing to have it actually availing to the soul. The providing and offering of it to us in the Gospel, is the wonderful goodness and mercy of God; the receiving of it, by believing in the offer thus made, is the duty and the privilege of the believer, yea, it is the duty of every one individual to whom the tidings of the Gospel are addressed. There is nothing which can make it availing to the soul, but the grace or principle of faith being established there. The establishment of that principle in the soul is indeed the work of God; but He promises to bestow it upon those who ask it from Him, so that our special business is, to come unto God, feeling and confessing our natural unbelief, and beseeching Him to bestow this faith upon us. And it is assuredly true, that not only is this offer, made to sinners in the Gospel, slighted, and disbelieved, and rejected, by those who neglect positively and obviously the matters of eternal salvation, and who make it not the business of their mind and life to have their salvation made sure; but it is also true, that those who are roused and awakened into an actual and serious care of the soul, and a careful attention to the testimony

of God, will experience many doubts and many fears regarding their own actual interest in the precious provision thus made of God to suit their wants, and which is freely offered to their acceptance. When roused from his former and habitual carelessness to feel his own guilt and danger, and to recognise somewhat of the character of God, the sinner looks to the denunciations of God's wrath made known against sin and sinners; he now feels these addressed to and against himself; he feels and knows that he indeed is guilty,—that he is undeserving of favour from God, and he is still so far unacquainted with the character of God, that he has anxious doubts and fears concerning the *possibility* of God's freely offering unto *him* personally the righteousness of Christ, to be imputed unto him as his own, that for its sake, he may be blessed with a full and perfect pardon, and have his soul accepted with a righteous and holy God. Now, in such a state of mind, when any individual is brought to experience it, while the Spirit of God leads the mind to contemplate the offers and provision of grace through Christ Jesus, there is no concealing of the fact, and there ought to be none on our part in addressing you, that the principalities and powers of spiritual wickedness will strive with the soul to withhold it from reposing its confidence in the offered righteousness of the Lord Jesus. The individual then experiences slavish

fear and terror, and is thrown back, as it were, on the sum and substance of his own personal unworthiness and guilt, when he would strive to rest his soul on the offered privilege. In such a state the righteousness of Christ is not yet become his breastplate, for the arrows of Satan pierce his soul, and destroy his peace, and lead him to dishonour, in mind, the love and grace of God in Christ, by refusing to believe that these *can* be so great and extensive as they are represented to be in the gospel. It is not, observe, your feeling of your own guilt in the sight of God, which is wrong or dangerous, but it is *that feeling withholding* you from trusting in the righteousness of Christ, and from believing that God freely offers to impute it to *you* as an individual. The former, the conviction of sin, if indeed wrought in you, is the work of God,—the latter, the doubts and fears and terrors, the uncertainties and suspicions you have regarding the sincerity and freeness of the gospel-offer, is the work of the devil. The former would and does lead you to esteem the tidings of the gospel precious and acceptable indeed to your soul; the latter makes you to *question* whether those tidings are addressed to *you* individually; and thus you remain, under the influence so far of temptation's power as to be excluded from every true consolation, and comfort, and joy, provided you in the everlasting Gospel of

Christ. It is worthy of particular observation, that the manner in which the enemies of the soul prevail against it in keeping it separated from the armour provided and offered in our text, is, by bringing before the soul its own unworthiness, often in such a light as that the feeling experienced assumes the appearance of very deep and very desirable humility. "I am not worthy that such mercy and favour should be shown unto me of God," is the language of the doubting soul, and, "it is in vain that such a sinner as I am should have hope, or should strive to have faith and confidence in Christ, according to the offers of the gospel." Now, when such is your reasoning, and such your fears, most obviously they come not from Him who calleth you. He tells you, Himself, that He came "not to call the righteous, but sinners unto repentance;" and in your fancied humility, you are just sinning with a high and lofty spirit of rebelliousness against God. Does not God show to you, in all His testimony, and in all His doings, through Christ, that it was not for any thing in man which deserves mercy or favour, that He devised and perfected the way of salvation, and that He now truly does offer its benefits? But you are actually rebelling against that testimony of His, and in your practice denying it, when you lay not hold of the righteousness of Christ as the safety and the strength of your soul. You

are denying, in fact, the sovereignty and righteousness of God in devising such a plan of salvation, and saying unto Him, that it is for the worthy and the good that He ought to have provided it. And what can be more guilty than this in the sight of God? What can be more dishonourable to Him than such conduct on the part of those whom He seeks to bless and to enrich with the bounties of His own free and sovereign grace? But there is more guilt even than this, contracted by those who do not gladly receive and embrace the gospel-offer of Christ's righteousness, because, as they say, of their own unworthiness. The next evil which they commit, is the imagining now that their own humility, and spiritual modesty, so to speak, their diffidence, and distrust of themselves, form together, a qualification which merits the approval and the favour of God; and they come now, as they fancy, unto Christ, with such a preparation and merit of their own, that they think He cannot but accept and bless them. Such is the issue of those proud reasonings and doubtings which find a place in many a soul through the adversary's wiles and evil suggestions; and yet, after all this, they are found still subject to bondage or slavish fear; you have yet no freedom of confidence in Christ, and you have not assuredly the spirit of children with regard to God as a God in Christ, begun or established in your soul.

While you come with any price in your hand, you can never feel under obligations to saving grace, in such a manner as will either set you free from this spirit of bondage, or will generate in your soul true and genuine love to Him who first loved sinners. You have the feeling, though unconsciously it may be to yourselves, (till you search and try your own heart,) that you have paid your price for the benefit to be received, that you have attained unto a humility, or such a frame and temper of mind as make you not unworthy of the loving-kindness of God; and thus you continue to be astray from the true exercise of spiritual life, and its genuine affections in your heart and mind. But the true state of the matter with you is, that you have been yielding, in all this history and experience of yours, to the suggestions of your spiritual enemy, the very first moment at which you saw and acknowledged in your own heart-felt experience, in your conscience and mind, your need of another righteousness than your own, and when you also saw, set before you in the Gospel, that such a righteousness was provided and offered; then, the very first doubts you experienced whether it was offered to *you*, this was the work of the enemy within you, by which your soul has been wounded, and impeded in its true Christian course, and kept back from entering that stronghold in which you could find everlasting safety

and strength. In having such convictions of sin wrought in you as show your need of the righteousness of Christ; and such measure of light as did not fail to make manifest to your very reason and consciousness as a rational being, that the offer is made unto all, then your duty and business are, to give way to no questions or doubtings regarding the sincerity of the gospel-offer to you personally, but to lay hold on the word of God, as your authority and warrant for believing, and for putting forthwith your confidence in the Lord Jesus, as your righteousness and your strength. You will indeed feel your own inability to do this, and the evil suggestions of which we have now spoken will enter your mind, but you must strive against them, and still look to the word and testimony of God, which are faithful and sure, and feeling your own inability to believe, you must come to God, with your unbelief as your special sin, and wait upon *Him* for that power from on high which will enable you to receive the offer, and cordially to embrace it.

In such a situation as we endeavour now to describe, your duty most assuredly is, to consider with increased diligence and care the testimony of God, to set your mind and your efforts to recognise in it the freeness, the sovereign freeness and fulness of divine grace, manifested to guilty and lost sinners in the man Christ Jesus, and in

thus obeying or striving to obey His own word of counsel and invitation; and looking to Him for the aid and power of His own Spirit to work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and the work of faith with power, you will not be put to shame, but will experience, that His word is true, and that His righteousness is altogether sufficient for you, and not more sufficient than it is assuredly offered unto you individually.

And in connexion with these remarks, we would just observe, how unworthy are the sentiments which we often meet with, among those who are, seemingly, under no small degree of conviction regarding their own sinfulness: it is their own unworthiness, their own unfitness to be objects of divine favour and grace, which they continually complain of; whereas your complaint ought to be, that you are unable to honour and reverence that grace of God which has appeared unto all men, just by simply and honestly trusting in it, as indeed it is offered unto you personally. Your want of faith in God ought to be the feeling of your soul, urging you to a throne of grace, as a poor and needy suppliant, and which ought to keep you there, pleading with God till He please to send forth His Spirit unto you, by whose heavenly strength and aid you would be enabled, to *have* implicit and full trust in the offered and perfect righteousness of Christ setting you free from

all condemnation. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." This is the language of the true church of God in every age, and of every individual who is guided and led to receive cordially the offer of the Gospel, which is freely made to them.

But we doubt not that some will say to all this, that they have *been* led thus to cast themselves upon the free offer of the Gospel, and that they fancied they had obtained this saving view of Christ as their righteousness and their strength; but that still unbelief seems to prevail against them, and that they are continually or habitually found forgetting both their obligations to redeeming grace, and the practical course of holiness unto which the gospel calls and invites them. This indeed is sin. But consider how this forgetfulness of yours, in the first place, originates within you, if indeed you ever have come to entertain clear, and settled, and believing views of the righteousness of Christ, as the surety and safety of your soul. You have been found—and summon up the recollection now of your own past mental history—you have been found looking more to what was wrought in you,—in other words, more to your own views and feelings and experience, for safety and acceptance with God, than to the righteousness of Christ; and by thus conducting yourself, and trusting to your own strength, you

have fallen away from your stedfastness; and the enemies of your soul have found it not even a difficult matter to obtain the victory over you in your habitual goings. For, observe, the righteousness, or finished work of Christ, is the way through which you can derive any one blessing from God. It is not only the medium through which,—the work on His part,—for the very sake of which the sinner receives the pardon of his sins, and the benefit of justification, but it is also the way through which God continues to bestow upon his people every other spiritual blessing of which they constantly stand in need. Now, we fear that many just think so unworthily of the righteousness of Christ, as to imagine, that if they obtain pardon of sin through it, or even the experience in themselves of a *hope* of pardon, that they have thus no more to do with it,—and that they have to look to other sources for those other blessings of which they stand in need. This is altogether at direct variance with the counsels, and with the covenant of God which brings salvation. It is through the righteousness of Christ—His having fulfilled all righteousness as the surety and sacrifice for sinners, that God bestows every grace and every one benefit. It is through and for the sake of the Lamb who was slain and is alive again, and His intercession now with God in the heavens, presenting there before the eternal

throne His own finished work, in His body and soul, that God can look in mercy on any one sinner, or that any gift or grace continues to be bestowed even upon those who believe. Now, has this view of the righteousness of Christ been upheld in your mind? We would fear that it has not; but that you have been found, as we already observed, putting your confidence for continued blessings in other sources than the merit or righteousness of Christ. And when this is the case, you cannot continue to receive strength from God, or the disposition with which to remember, and serve, and glorify Him. As this righteousness of Christ is the only way through which God can bestow mercy and favour and spiritual bounties, so it is that which must form the continual stronghold of all your expectations and hopes. When you cease to look to it, then, at the same moment, you begin to ask amiss, and you ask and you receive not; and in consequence of these repeated disappointments which come to you, you again begin to question and doubt the good will and the faithfulness of God towards you personally; when the truth is, that you refuse His testimony in this matter, and put away from you the breastplate by the strength of which alone you can be upheld in the paths of a practical obedience. Then, the sins which you commit will rise before you, in condemning and terrifying power,—and the spi-

ritual enemies of the soul will augment your fears and your terror, until you think that even the whole of practical religion is vain, or that it is hopeless for *you* to strive for the attainment of any of its habitual exercise within you; that you are making no advances in spiritual life,—that you are not arriving at any of those acquirements in the Christian character which the word of God represents as belonging to His children.

Such doubts and distresses often prevail with those who are, we trust, under the guidance still of the grace and Spirit of God. But remember, that the cause of these distresses with you, if you be in our hearing who experience them, is your not continuing to look to the righteousness of Christ as your only defence;—your turning away from Him who saith—"Behold me, behold me," "*Look unto me*, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

Seek, then, more enlarged, more settled, more habitual knowledge and remembrance of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. His perfect and finished work as the Mediator and head of the new covenant; and with this as the breastplate of the soul, the enemy can never triumph against you; and such a believing and intelligent view of the righteousness of Christ will impress your soul continually with the remembrance that you owe all to God, and as you do so, that it is your duty and

your privilege also to give yourself wholly to God. In looking to what Christ hath done and suffered for sinners,—in the knowledge of God as thus manifested in Christ, you will see and feel more and more abundantly how high the privilege is of your being permitted to serve and to glorify Him with your spirit and body; and such being your views of his character, and excellency, and everlasting love, sin will not continue to have dominion over you:—you will feel yourself actuated by higher and nobler motives than those which prevail with the people of this world, when they serve their own evil affections, and are led captive of sin. And when you find your mind, as if turned away from the contemplation of the work and person and intercession of Christ, O, seek again from God that you were brought back renewedly to the Bishop and Shepherd of your soul: to be implanted in him through a living faith;—to have Him continually set before you, is the only way in which you can obtain safety and peace, and spiritual strength; and in thus looking unto Him, you will not fail to have the well-grounded hope, that through His own righteousness and merit there will continue to come to your mind and heart those supplies of grace which shall keep you from evil, and which shall strengthen you in the ways of the Lord. And when the fiery darts of temptation, and of

evil affections, and passions assail you,—then, too, your safety is in considering in the light of Christ's righteousness the nature of those sins. O, consider how it was that He obtained this righteousness for you—even by His enduring the anger and wrath of God which was due to them—think how He must look upon such sins in you; when they crucified him the Lord of glory, and put Him to shame; and when you consider that unless that love were found in Him, which led Him to undertake the work,—which sustained Him in patience and meekness under the sufferings due to those very sins which now work and seek ascendancy in you,—that you could never hope but to be the eternal prey of these your spiritual adversaries—surely you will then be animated with new courage, and resolution, and strength, to make a stand against the power of evil, and to resist its progress; and coming unto Him who is made your righteousness in this manner, He will be made also unto you your sanctification and redemption,—for the believing view of His person, and character, and wonderful works, will repel and drive away from your soul those unworthy, unholy, and rebellious workings of mind and of conduct, by which the world dishonour God, and through the instrumentality of which Satan deceives them, and allures them to their everlasting ruin.

This might all be well, you will say, If we had faith to appropriate to ourselves this righteousness of Christ, to believe that we really and personally have an interest in it. But, my friends, this is no excuse for sin, your not yet having the assurance that your interest in Christ is secured. Do you see that His righteousness is precious in itself,—that it is worthy of all reverence and honour from you,—the grace and eternal love which provided it, and which now freely offer it to you? And if such be your views regarding it, even when you have not yet obtained the assurance you seek for—is there not a call upon you, and that the offer is made to you to receive it, to devote yourselves to the service of Him who makes the precious offer? It is in looking unto it even in this manner, that the righteousness of Christ becomes the breastplate of the soul—and if you feel it not in this manner to have efficacy and authority in quelling the risings of sin and resisting temptations, then be assured that you have not yet seen it aright, or learned its value; and you must submit yourselves unto God, to be taught of Him, that your eyes might be enlightened to behold your need of it, in a manner which, alas! you have not hitherto learned. If your views and knowledge of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus be not such as to make sin hateful to you, and if they be not such as to quicken your desires

after true holiness of heart, and mind, and conduct,—then it is, indeed, because you have not yet believed, because you receive not in truth the testimony of God regarding your own personal character and standing in His sight, and concerning the greatness and sovereignty of His redeeming love and grace. The assurance that you have faith in the righteousness of Christ, and that you have an interest in that righteousness through faith, is a different thing from faith itself separately considered; and we would just remark, that the view of the righteousness of Christ as offered to you in the Gospel, which reproves sin in your soul, and which awakens you unto righteousness in your own life practically, *is* a believing view, whether you have yet been able to know, or not, or to be assured, that you have believed. Seek for such assurance, as your duty, and ask it from God as the privilege, which He alone can bestow; but even now, while it is not yet possessed or enjoyed by you, let your soul be found exercised, in striving to obtain, equally with the assurance of your personal interest in the righteousness of Christ, increased knowledge, and discernment, and understanding regarding that righteousness of His, as the foundation of the soul's hope, and the breastplate of the soul to defend it from the attacks of every spiritual enemy. You must surely obtain this knowledge of it, ere you can attain

an assurance of your interest in it, and true knowledge of it is evidenced by the effect it produces in the soul, slaying there the enmity of the natural mind against the authority and the commandments of God, and repelling the assaults of sin and temptation when these would lead you to forget God, and to act dishonourably to His name and cause.

And, my friends, it is this view of the righteousness of Christ,—your own need of it,—your own absolute dependence upon it, for every good and every perfect gift, which will bring your soul to pursue that active and sincere righteousness of life, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and which, in its own place, is also profitable to show forth the praises of the Lord, and to make His grace, in its blessed effects, manifest unto all men. Upon that part of our subject time will not now permit us to enter. But from what we have advanced, we would not consider our labour lost, were any individual soul brought to feel more than ever before, its need of experiencing the persuasion and power of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ,—the value, the excellence of His righteousness. And if any of you do thus feel your need, O, delay not to come unto Him, who faithfully promises to listen to the voice of your supplications. Bear in mind that it is in Christ all fulness dwells; and that through His righteousness,

all that fulness is purchased, to be on your side, to supply all your wants, and to defend you from all your enemies. And His righteousness being thus made availing to you, you must be seen and known of all men, showing forth a practical righteousness in your life also;—sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

SERMON III.

EPHES. vi. 14, last clause.

Having on the breast-plate of righteousness.

IN already addressing you from these words, we were endeavouring to show, that the righteousness of Christ is here specially meant as constituting to the believer the breast-plate of the soul, in the conflicts and trials of a true spiritual and Christian warfare. By the righteousness of Christ are meant, as we formerly endeavoured to show, His doings and sufferings in behalf of sinners, or as the surety and sacrifice of His people, commonly called in theological language, the active and the passive obedience of Christ. And to be again particular on this subject, we would just beg to remind you, that the active obedience of Christ signifies the perfect obedience which He gave in His own personal life and conversation on earth, to every demand of the whole law of God: and it is a matter too sadly forgotten by professing Christians, that in every act and movement of

His life upon earth, yea in every aspiration and breathing of His holy soul, He stood just as much the surety for sinners, as He did when suspended on the cross. In all this He was fulfilling, as the covenant-head, as the surety of His people, the demands of that law which they had transgressed, and thus constituting and bringing in a righteousness to be available unto them; honouring and magnifying that law of God, which without being thus honoured, would have for ever condemned them, finding them guilty.

The passive obedience of Christ, signifies His sufferings for sin, the just for the unjust; His yielding Himself a willing sacrifice; taking upon Himself, in His human body and reasonable soul, all the anger and wrath of God which were due to the sins of His people; sustaining all the punishment which their sins deserved. This righteousness of Christ is freely offered to sinners, to be imputed to them as their own, that they may be, for its sake, accepted with God, their sins pardoned, their souls and persons fully justified, and set free from the sentence of condemnation which the law of God had already pronounced against them. This offer on the part of God, to sinners as we are, being most clearly and impressively made to us in the gospel of Christ, constitutes at once, both the warrant for our drawing near to God as sinners,—the ground of hope to us,—the

refuge set before us, and when truly believed in, or accepted, it constitutes also the strength and stability of the believer's way of access to God; and it is, moreover, as we endeavoured formerly to show, the channel through which every spiritual blessing and bounty is bestowed upon the believer's soul and person. This righteousness of Christ, then, is, as this apostle elsewhere expresses it, "unto all, and upon all them that believe." The ordaining and providing of it in Christ, the full and free offer of it—these constitute the grace of the gospel made known to guilty and perishing sinners. And we were endeavouring to show that it is from not believing in the offer made, from not accepting it, that the soul, even when in some measure aroused and awakened, continues faint, and unsteady, and weak, and wavering, in its course of a spiritual experience, and in its wonted habits. And however lightly this doctrine may be viewed by the unbeliever, it is not the less true, that the hindering and preventing of the soul from believing in the offer of the Gospel, and from resting upon it,—that this is the constant effort and aim of the enemies of the soul, those principalities and powers against which the believer has to strive and contend. The not believing in the offer of Christ's righteousness, weakens and wounds the soul; whereas firm confidence or faith in it, gives strength, and en-

ergy, and stability to the soul, in waiting upon God, and in the duties of the Christian life. The righteousness of Christ, then, becomes indeed its breast-plate, and gives steadfastness and strength of spirit to the believer, against those fears and apprehensions, and doubts, and suspicions, concerning the grace, and mercy, and faithfulness of God, which would otherwise overcome the mind, and sink the spirit of man into despondency and despair. And assuredly, my friends, it is when this righteousness of Christ is beheld as precious by the soul,—when the believer is brought to know and to embrace it now as his own—when he beholds the wondrous and the glorious way of its preparation and offer to him—it is *then* that he truly recognises his own personal obligations to God, as a God manifested in Christ; and it is then, too, that he will feel, new, and urgent, and prevailing motives to serve God, in the doing of His holy will. It is then his energies will be roused, and his affections quickened on the side of God; and just in the proportion as he feels himself debtor to the righteousness of Christ, he will manifest a practical righteousness in his own life and conversation, and walk, abhorring every iniquity—every evil and crooked way. It is then that his light will even so shine before men, that they will see the believer's works to be also good, and all his intentions upright.

Hitherto, however, we have been endeavouring to shew you, as if only one side of the true Christian's breast-plate. To examine it in its strength and solidity, as the defence of the soul from Satan's temptations, and this world's vexations and trials, and its seductive allurements also, we must endeavour to bring before you more still of its excellency and its strength. We have hitherto been speaking of the righteousness of Christ, brought in and perfected by Him in His finished work as the Mediator. From the excellency, and perfection, and glory of this, God forbid that we should seek to detract; we only feel that we fail in bringing its glory and greatness of value sufficiently before you. But we are now endeavouring to follow the workings of a mind, anxious on the subject of everlasting salvation; and if we might presume to say that we are not ignorant of Satan's devices, we would seek to guide those who are truly anxious, to the rightful using of this defensive armour, in the prosecution of their spiritual warfare. We must learn to view, undoubtedly, the righteousness of God,—considered in the sense of an eternal and unchangeable attribute of the divine character,—as a matter distinct in itself from the righteousness of Christ, of which we have spoken. The righteousness of God is one thing; the righteousness of Christ, the finished work which He performed by his active and pass-

ive obedience, in his office of mediator between God and man, is another thing. We would wish you to bear this distinctly in mind; indeed we doubt not but some have borne it in mind already, though unconsciously to themselves, in a manner that has not been good for them; and it is with the view of correcting certain practical errors on this important point, that I am anxious to enter upon this part of our subject. When I speak of the righteousness of God as an essential and eternal attribute of His character, it may perhaps be useful to state to you, that by the righteousness of God, I mean nothing else than the justice of God, the two terms being but different designations of the same attribute. Now, we know, that on this subject none will readily follow us, but those who have experienced in their conscience and heart a sense of sin as committed against God. But to you, my friends, the justice of God has appeared as an attribute of His character fearful to contemplate: the amount of impression which its consideration leaves on your mind, is that of an undeviating strictness on the part of God to punish sin with everlasting punishment. This justice or strictness on the part of God frequently fills your mind with fear, if not with terror: in short, you have not yet learned, perhaps, to contemplate this attribute of Deity with comfort to your soul. When you feel your own sinfulness both by na-

ture and in actual deeds, the conviction of this sinfulness and guilt on your own part brings immediately before you the justice or strictness of God to punish sin by the inflictions of His anger and wrath; and this saddens and depresses your spirit within you. You may think of the righteousness of Christ,—of His finished work for sin, and you may seek to have comfort there, and yet in practice you find not the comfort you would seek to lay hold of. The remedy suited to this fear, is an enlarged contemplation of the scheme and way of redemption in Jesus Christ. You are filled with fear, or at least deprived of comfort, in your apprehensions of the justice of God being still an attribute of His character, which is opposed to you. You cannot, indeed, think too seriously or too solemnly of the justice of God,—it is beyond all controversy an attribute of Deity which is unchangeable, as all his glorious attributes and perfections are. But we would call upon you to consider, whence it is, that the righteousness of Christ, as already explained, originated and was brought in, and perfected. It was the justice of God which demanded the surety and sacrifice of Christ. And all that Christ did and suffered for sin *was all* that the justice of God demanded. The strictness of God to punish sin, is most unquestionable; but is it not made manifest to you in His own word that He consented to

punish it in the person of a surety, as testified of by the prophet, when he says concerning Christ: "Surely He hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted? But He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon *Him*; and with *His* stripes *we* are *healed*." Now, the justice of God in punishing sin is made known in Christ; and surely more emphatically and signally there, when we consider who He was who endured the infliction, than it could be made known in any other manner of way. This, indeed, you will readily admit, if your mind has at all been turned to contemplate habitually the great mystery of the Gospel, God manifested in the flesh;—but then you are still prone to consider this manifestation of the justice of God, as bringing just the more impressively and vividly before you the danger in which your sinful soul is, of its being also manifested against *you*. But surely such thoughts can only arise from your turning your mind away from the testimony of God in His word. Christ suffered once for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring sinners again unto God. This was the end of His sufferings,—the purpose for which God did inflict them upon Him not only to make known His justice and His anger against sin, but to substitute Christ for sin-

ners as you are; your sin-offering, that your soul might be set free from condemnation and guilt. Your mind then has need to be led into a contemplation and knowledge of the covenant of grace, in which God was pleased to ordain this sacrifice for sin in your room, that His justice might be glorified and your soul set free from the punishment which your sins deserved. And when you contemplate the justice or righteousness of God now, you are to contemplate it as already satisfied for sin, in the person of Him who is at once the sin-offering and the great High Priest of His people—in whom, as an atonement for sin, God is well pleased, and of which He hath given such ample testimony in Christ's rising again from the dead, and in His being received up into Glory; and in the promise of the covenant being so amply, and signally, and visibly fulfilled in the experience of His saints in every age of the Church; —the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, to dwell with them, to create them anew in the spirit of their minds, and to guide their footsteps in the paths of filial love and obedience to God, and in holy perseverance and godly zeal for the advancement of God's glory and cause in the world. In this manner, it is clearly to be seen that the righteousness or justice of God, though separate and distinct in itself from the mediatorial righteousness of Christ, stands so intimately con-

nected with it, as to be indeed the cause which rendered necessary the righteousness of Christ to be brought in and perfected in behalf of guilty sinners: and now, its connexion with the righteousness of Christ is a connexion, not of opposition unto it, but of entire satisfaction with it, through which peace and good-will from God to sinners is loudly and clearly proclaimed—the gospel testifying unto you all:—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is here, as the Psalmist expresses it, that "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other:" and the spiritual benefits, flowing to sinners through this satisfying of the justice of God in the person of Jesus Christ, are in beautiful expressions of heavenly truth set before us in the verses immediately following—"Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before them; and shall set us in the way of his steps." Now, it is in beholding the righteousness or justice of God, satisfied for sin, in those very doings and sufferings of Christ, *constituting His mediatorial* righteousness—it is in this enlightened and believing view that the Christian finds safety and comfort to his soul; and that righteousness, even

the righteousness of God becomes indeed his breast-plate.

But there is still more than we have yet adverted to, implied in this view of the Gospel's manifestation which it makes of the character and government of God. His justice being satisfied for sin in the personal doings and sufferings of Christ, it becomes consistent with all the attributes of his glorious character, to bestow, even upon the chief of sinners, every good and every perfect gift. Nor can we have the proper edifying and comforting view of this without our becoming well acquainted, through the testimony of God's word, and its effectual application to our souls by the Spirit of truth, with the conditions of the covenant of grace, made with Christ, as the representative of His people. There, as manifested clearly in the scripture, God promises and engages to bestow gifts and mercies upon sinners. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." And, therefore, in this view, the greatest sinner is called upon to come unto God, and through Christ Jesus is entitled to plead with God, for the receiv-

ing of His spiritual gifts and bounties of grace. He is entitled to plead even the righteousness or justice of God, that He should, according to His own covenant and stipulated conditions, so to speak, in Christ Jesus, bestow upon the sinner, pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. And thus, it is also said by an inspired apostle:—"If we confess our sins, He is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness: so that instead of the justice of God being a cause of terror, or dismay, or disheartening contemplation to your soul, it ought rather, as it legitimately may, to be the comfort and safeguard of your soul's hope and confidence in God through Jesus Christ,—that He is just and true to bestow upon you every mercy of which you stand in need: and the very view which depresses you most,—your own sinfulness and guilt, if such indeed be your experience, contrasting that character and state of yours with the justice and strictness of God to punish, ought to make you the more solemnly and steadily to contemplate the way which God has been graciously pleased to find out a ransom, and to perfect for you in Christ a way of escape from the wrath to come, which your sins had deserved. And the more this way is pondered upon, and seen into by the spiritual enlightening of the understanding and mind, the more comfort and peace,

and joy in believing will its contemplation afford; seeing then that all which the justice of God required as punishment of sin is already given; and in the way of His own appointment; and seeing that His very righteousness or justice, and His eternal truth, are pledged to bestow upon you the pardon of all your sins, through Jesus Christ, and a participation in every spiritual blessing which constitutes the well-being and the eternal salvation and happiness of the soul. Strive then to obtain this habitual view of the righteousness or justice of God, as fully satisfied for sin, and now pledged in Christ to bestow upon you all the blessings of salvation, until you be able to say with the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." God is now your judge, as he will be at the great day of account, and you, laying hold upon Christ as your righteousness freely and fully offered unto you, He looks upon you as righteous, acquitted of every condemnation which formerly lay against you; and as God is the ruler also, the governor of the

world and His creatures; upon you, if you are a believer in Christ, He is pledged to bestow, whatever is necessary to insure and establish your everlasting salvation. The justice of God is, in one word, on your side, to defend you from every evil, and let this be your breast-plate in the time of your need. And behold the promises which are made to you in the Scriptures of truth, that God will be your strength and your strong-hold according to your need. "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Now the righteousness of God, thus secured to the believer through the mediatorial righteousness of Christ, constitutes the safety of the believer's soul, and through it He will protect, and uphold, and deliver every one of those who put their confidence in Christ, and in God as manifested in Him. Your safety is suspended on this eternal attribute of the Godhead, as much as on any other of His perfections; and if your safety be here, your comfort is also suspended upon your believing view of it. And then, in your doubts and fears, seek for enlightening of mind in the knowledge of this righteousness. The promise of Christ is, that the Holy Spirit will convince of righteousness as He also does of sin: Come you, therefore, in your time of need unto God, beseeching Him to bestow upon you according to

His righteousness in Christ, and the establishment of the covenant of promise, the Spirit of truth to guide and enlighten, and to establish your soul in the knowledge and belief of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus; and that truth will make you free; it will deliver your soul from the slavish and unbelieving fears which now oppress or discourage you.

We trust that from these remarks it cannot but appear, that every hope or confidence which the sinner desires to exercise towards God, and for salvation, on the ground of his own personal righteousness or merit, must be utterly unavailing and vain. Such hopes or confidence are at utter variance with the testimony of God and with the way of salvation which He has so graciously constituted and revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ. And they are not more contrary to the will of God, than they must also ever prove unsatisfactory to the mind itself which seeks to cherish them. They afford no solid foundation on which to rest or establish the soul. Every renewed feeling of sin in the conscience must take away the comfort and peace of that mind which seeks to lean upon its own good qualities, or good sentiments, or good doings, or works, for acceptance with God. Such a mind is the slave of every sinful affection, and passion, and movement; unacquainted with the character of God as manifested in Christ, it

has no higher motive to obedience than the slavish terror of punishment; and in such a state it continually disobeys and dishonours God; and at every renewed act of disobedience which conscience testifies against, there is the fear of punishment awakened anew; and all the impression regarding God which that mind has, is a fearful looking for of indignation and wrath, and this continually and renewedly augmented whenever sin is fallen into, and the prospects of judgment and eternity brought near to the mind. But the enlightened believer, on the other hand, is enabled to confide in God with assured confidence and hope. Feeling, in himself that there is nothing good, or deserving the mercy or favour of God, and feeling the favour of God to be the very life and happiness of the soul, he looks to the righteousness of Christ as his hope and the strength of his confidence; and the more he contemplates the scheme and work of salvation manifested and perfected in Christ, the more cause he feels to have his confidence established upon God, as a God of infinite righteousness and justice. Beholding the wonders which God has wrought for him in Christ, he feels urged and animated to serve God with the whole heart and soul, and he desires to be made conform to His will in all things. And in seeking those bounties and gifts of grace by which the soul might grow in conformity to God's

will, the believer knows and feels it to be consistent now with the justice of God that the sinner should receive these bounties even abundantly. And while those have this strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them, while with respect to God, they have this hope and confidence in the righteousness of Christ and of God, as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, the same hope and confidence with respect to the conquest of their spiritual enemies, constitute, indeed, the breast-plate of the soul. In the hour of temptation the Christian is, under the influence of this enlightened view of the character of God, upheld from falling into sin,—his affections and heart are now on the side of God, the God of his salvation, and he will strive to honour Him; and in the hour of trials, and fears, and difficulties, when he feels as if sin were abounding, and as if grace were denied him, this view of the righteousness of Christ and of God will be the breast-plate of his soul, it will keep back from entering into the soul those evil purposes and affections and feelings, which are the fiery darts of the wicked, and which when admitted into the soul would light up within it a very conflagration of moral turpitude and baseness by which God would be disobeyed and dishonoured, and His allegiance cast away, and the soul itself carried

forward into a headlong career of self-destruction. And how manifestly, how mournfully often is such a work of Satan seen in the case of those who are even stout in defending the merits of their own righteousness; let but one incitement to sin be presented to their mind, one evil passion inflamed and awakened, and the whole inner man is then in commotion and tumult, eager upon the commission of some deed of palpable iniquity; and the commandments of God are trampled upon as if they were words of nought and vanity; the sanctions of His holy law are then utterly disregarded; and the sin which found its effectual way of working in the unsubdued affections and evil corruptions of the inner man, defiles the outward man also in his practical goings, and makes him, alas how frequently! injurious to his fellows as he is hateful to God.

But there is still another view of the righteousness of Christ and of God prepared and offered in the Gospel as the breast-plate of the believer's soul, which we desire to bring before you. The believer is called upon to consider God habitually as the ruler of all things, in providence as well as in grace. His temporal destinies, and lot, and circumstances are in the hands of God. And all the testimony of God concurs in showing you, that all government is committed unto Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, to be administered by Him for

the good of his own people. And despised or poor, or afflicted though they may be in this world's estimation and view, the whole of this world's eventful history will be seen and admitted at last, in the great day of the revelation of God from heaven in judgment, to have been ruled and administered in subserviency to the purpose of their eternal salvation. The whole procedure of God in providence will then be unfolded, dark and mysterious as its volume now is, to exhibit in every page, the purpose of God, in making it the end of this created scene, to bring many sons and daughters to glory. And the believing view of this administration of God by Jesus Christ, for the good of His people, will administer comfort and strength, as it assuredly does, to those who have put their trust in the Lord. He is righteous in this administration, just and true, to make all things work together for good, to those who know and who love Him. We are but of yesterday and know nothing; but God is judge and governor, and He on whose shoulder the government is, knows all things, the end even from the beginning: and His eye is ever upon each one of His people, for good. When the dispensations of His providence seem adverse to them, and when He shows to them hard things; still, His essential righteousness as God fails not, and He is just in all things; and moreover, His mediatorial righteousness has

procured for every believer not only that which is good, of the temporal and spiritual gifts necessary for them, but the distribution of them, in the way most conducive to their best, their eternal interests. This righteousness of God exercised and administered in providence, as in grace, through Jesus Christ, when looked into, trusted and confided in, will prove as the breast-plate of the soul, in the hours of dark and mysterious dispensations; and in those periods when God sees it good and necessary for the soul to dispense to it the sorest afflictions and trials in the outward lot. And if you, my friends, seek for comfort or peace here, O seek it not in the plenty or multitude of your temporal benefits. While you seek and search for it there, it will be to you as the shadow which flits and changes continually, and mocks the gazer's eye, in that it cannot be seized or ever laid hold of; but seek both your comfort and peace, in the realizing faith and experience that the Lord your Saviour reigneth, and that in His hands are all your well-springs, that He is righteous and faithful and true, to give unto you all which He knows will prove for your good; and faithful to withhold, and to take away from you, what would otherwise prove injurious and hurtful to your spiritual and eternal well-being. And when this trust and confidence are established in your soul, then will the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus

prove a breast-plate unto you. In the first place, this view of the government and dispensations of God will give you courage, and patience, and resignation in the time of adversity and of trouble. It will uphold you from being the victims of despondency or despair, or of those evil and injurious doubtings regarding the care of God over you, or His good will towards you, which are so ready to seize the soul in days of dark adversity, and to make it forget the Lord, and murmur at His dispensations; as if He had neither right, thus to deal with you, and as if you had no profit in waiting upon Him. And again, consider this, that it is the want of having this habitual view of the righteous government of God which causes that you go forward to many a doing, to the planning of many a scheme, just as if God ruled not at all, not referring, in the temper and spirit of your mind, every issue to His sovereign will and control. It is such enterprises and undertakings and plans, however well they may promise, and however fairly they prosper for a time, which must wound and deceive you at last, in some of their results or their issues, if you indeed believe in the Lord. But the righteousness of the Lord in His supreme government will become your breast-plate in truth, when you are made submissive unto it, in seeking that all your doings should be according to His will. His will is your sanctification. Do you con-

cur in this purpose of God when you meditate and plan your future doings and works? And if you have not hitherto done so, wonder not that the dispensations of providence have been contrary to you, and rather bless His name for His faithfulness in reproving you. And seek now, to be humbled under His mighty hand, against whom you have so often and so habitually offended. Is it not of His own long-suffering that He continues to bless or at all to uphold you in your forgetfulness of Him and in your practical rejecting of His divine authority over you. Let it become your daily and habitual study to know and try whether your purposes and your motives of action are such as God can approve, even a holy and righteous God, who in all His loving-kindness and tender mercy in Christ, is unchangeably righteous in hating iniquity, and who calls you from all iniquity into purity and holiness of heart and of life in all things, to desire His glory, and the good of your fellow-men. Surely if you believe in the gracious purpose and counsels of God, even in His providence that He overrules all for the salvation of His chosen people, and if you desire to be found of the number, if you *hope* to be of the number, or now that you are so, you must feel it your duty and your privilege to do all things as to God, and in the manner which would show forth most His praise, by His will being done on

earth by you personally. And it is thus, that the righteousness of God being considered, and acquiesced in, and reverently adored by the believing mind, the paths of the believer will be found in righteousness practically, far removed from every sinister purpose, and from every end which seeks concealment, or cloak, or covering. This view of the righteousness of God in His supreme government of the world will be as a breast-plate to the believer, defending him from the arrows of the adversary, from the enticements and allurements of this present evil world, which, when obtaining an influence in the mind, will turn the goings away from the paths of a practical righteousness. But the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day; and his deeds become manifest, that they are wrought on the high principles of a spiritual integrity and purity of conscience and of mind, in reverence and love to God, and in peace and good will to men. It would indeed be too much to say, that all this will ensure to the believer, the prosperity of all his worldly undertakings, or the abounding of his temporal gratifications. His aim must be nobler and higher than all these, his record must be on high, and the wisdom and faithfulness of God, as well as His righteousness will be the dispensers of all events to him. But this confidence in the righteousness

of God will insure to the believer, whatever may happen, in this life, a peace which passeth knowledge, a peace of mind, in his having himself staid upon God, and an unspeakable comfort and joy in knowing, that this scene of trial and toil is not his rest, that he is here but a pilgrim and sojourner, travelling onwards to an infinitely better and happier country, to a city and place of rest and enjoyment, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. In the way towards it the righteousness of Christ and of God will continue to defend and uphold him, and they will bring him at last into the enjoyment of the desired and expected inheritance. And in conclusion, consider that God the righteous judge of all, is now offering this righteousness unto each of you, that you are freely invited, earnestly intreated of God, to come and to receive it. And if we turn away from Him who speaketh from heaven, and who wrought out an everlasting righteousness for sinners as we are, O how shall we escape! Your own righteousness may give you a measure of favour with men; but this righteousness alone can give us favour and acceptance with God. May God grant, that we may now, each one of us, seek and receive it, to our true comfort and happiness here, and to our everlasting good and enjoyment in the life to come.

SERMON IV

EPHES. vi. 15.

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

YOU cannot fail to observe, that, in this verse, there is a continuation of the same figure of speech employed by the inspired writer in the verse immediately preceding: and that he here is bringing before us something which must be to the soul, in its course of warfare in this life, what shoes are to the feet, in a bodily sense, as known in the habits of those whom he addresses in this epistle. What he intends should be to them as shoes to their feet, is, The preparation of the Gospel of peace; and it must be our endeavour, in now addressing you from this passage, in the first place, to point out to you what is here signified by the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and then to show its fitness to answer the purpose which the apostle here expresses in

figure; together with showing by appeal to your own conscience and experience, the need you have of this defence, and its preciousness and safety to those who are provided with it, through grace.

In the first place, then, to explain the leading term of our text,—"the preparation of the Gospel of peace," we would seek to warn you against interpreting rashly general expressions of the kind now before us. The phrase here made use of, may be thought by many, at first sight, a very *general* sort of expression; either embracing a wide and extensive meaning, or an expression to which several different acceptations might be attached, without doing violence to its actual spirit or import. Now to receive expressions of scripture, intended to be of practical and habitual use to the Christian, in this vague and loose manner, is far from being satisfactory, and can scarcely be profitable. How then, it will be asked, are we to ascertain the accurate meaning of this, and of similar passages? Surely by diligent study of the scriptures themselves, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual,—seeking the direction and guidance of God,—the teaching of His Spirit to enlighten our minds, and to give us a humble docility, a perseverance of mind, and practical wisdom to understand the light which one portion of scripture can shed upon the other, when

brought to their own mutual aid. And, following this rule, we find different or various designations given to the Gospel, in the New Testament; such as, "the Gospel of the kingdom," "the Gospel of Christ," "the Gospel of salvation," "the Gospel of the grace of God," and "the Gospel of peace." We may observe, that the particular designation which may thus be given to the term Gospel, must have a reference to some particular or special characteristic of the Gospel's excellency. "The Gospel of the kingdom," thus refers to the kingdom which it was destined to establish in the souls of men, and visibly in the world. "The Gospel of Christ," refers especially to the glory of its Author, in His person and offices, and the excellency of its provisions as established in Him. And "the Gospel of peace" must signify in the same manner, or must refer us more especially to that peace which the Gospel establishes between God and man,—a peace which, without the Gospel scheme being devised and perfected, revealed and believed, could never be enjoyed by any one individual of our fallen and lost race: and let us remember, that there is also another blessing brought in by the Gospel, connected with that peace which we have now mentioned,—a peace among men,—a peace of man with man, which the Gospel, in its belief and reception, is calculated to produce, to

uphold, and to confirm. These two blessings will be confessed by all, valuable and precious; not only conducing to, or aiding to, but surely constituting the very elements of true happiness to the spirit of man within him. Were these two kinds of peace enjoyed, why, may we not say, what could be any longer either wanting or wrong; and when these are not enjoyed, O, what can be right! every thing is but gall and bitterness to the soul, whatever be its other means of enjoyment. But see that you be not found in your own meditations, putting that first which God has put last. Peace with *Him* is the grand element of human happiness, and of every true enjoyment deserving the name. With this, there may be indeed difference or variance with many men; but then, peace with God will soften and smooth it, and will have its tendency to heal it. And without peace with God, it signifies but little comparatively to the true happiness of the individual, what amount of peace he may have with those like himself,—the ungodly around him; it will soon come to an end at the best of it, and even during its fancied stability, the world which bestowed it can soon also take it away. The term, then, the Gospel of peace, bears a direct and emphatic reference to that peace which the Gospel brings in and offers unto us,—peace with God and also with men. And

in bringing this before you, we question not but your own minds will at once recur to that designation which the Gospel of Christ receives from the high authority of Heaven, when its immediate advent was sung on earth by angels in holy congratulation and joy: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good will towards men!" We shall have to recur to this peace again in a more particular manner; but we must first endeavour farther to describe the simile employed in our text, in the recommendation it gives to the Christian, of having his feet shod with it: and to explain this figure, we are to remember that the Christian's life is here represented as a course of warfare; that he is to be habitually engaged in contending with, and in overcoming, the enemies of the soul. The figure, then, bears a reference to the state of those who were thus engaged in a temporal and bodily manner. The military of those countries and times, engaged in the warfare of this world, had to force their way through rough and inhospitable regions. Open and smooth paths or roads were not prepared before them; obstacles of every kind, peculiar to uncultivated countries, for the most part, lay in their way; and a defence for their feet became a part of their usual habil-

iments, which was of no small importance. The form of garment which they wore, left most part of the leg uncovered, and what are called shoes in our translation, included in its acceptation with them, a defence for that whole part of the body. It required to be of such a texture and form, as not to encumber or load the person, while it had to minister defence in the thorny and rugged paths over which they had to pursue their way, and where they often had to contend with their foes. While those employed in the arts and occupations of peace and home, wore only sandals, or a defence for the soles of their feet from the ground, the attire of the warrior was such as to show him prepared to encounter and sustain bodily hardships and toil. This, then, is the literal import of the figure employed; and in addition to this, we must take also along with us, that, in scripture language, the feet or footsteps signify one's doings or actions; as in Psal. cxix. 59. &c. "I thought on my ways, and turned my *feet* unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Then, the practical amount of the figure employed in our text is, that, in all our goings, and in all our deeds and habits, there must be with us, a constant reference to the great principles and truths of God, which the Gospel of Christ unfolds; that it is in the constant view

and remembrance of them, the mind will be strengthened, and maintained in firmness and resolution to withstand the trials, and to overcome the hardships of that scene of sin, temptation, and suffering, in which we now are placed.

And to set some of those truths and principles before you, we would seek to impress on your minds, that the leading feature of the Gospel is, its bringing unto light the character and attributes of God. And having these revealed to the mind, as they are manifested in Christ Jesus, inspires the soul with confidence in God, and with the desire of loving and serving Him in all things. As no one can walk, in reference to this world's relations and business, with uniformity and moral consistency and rectitude, without certain moral principles being well and soundly established in the mind, so neither can we walk, as Christians, as those who aspire to immortality and glory, without having continually before us the character and attributes and government of that God, whom the Christian serves. And as the Gospel of Christ unfolds unto us the character and will of God, so does it present to the mind of every believer, that, among all His attributes, love and good will to men reign everlastingly and unchangeably. The revelation of this, which is given through Jesus Christ, is abundant and perfect; and it is in looking unto it, and beholding it, that the soul has peace with

God; and comfort under all the wise dispensations of His grace and providence. Abundant provision has been made in the way of salvation through Christ, to bestow upon us this peace. Our sins deserved anger and wrath from God, and everlasting destruction, but He was pleased from eternity, perceiving and knowing the condition to which sin would reduce the souls of those whom He purposed to save, to ordain a way of escape for them from the wrath to come; and this way, as the Gospel of peace reveals it, this preparation made by God in His own eternal counsel, shows forth, in every step of its marvellous accomplishment, that His thoughts were thoughts of peace and of good-will towards the sinful children of men. It is not our province here, to attempt any defence of those facts in the government of God, which bring out, that all men do not receive the benefit of Christ's salvation. All attempts indeed to unfold the ultimate causes of such procedure on the part of God, must of necessity fail; for the manifest reason, that our feeble and limited minds cannot scan the whole plan, and the whole interests of His government in this and in other worlds. And it is worse than presumption for individuals to whom the Gospel of peace is addressed, to suspend their belief, or even their efforts or desires to believe, upon their own fancied competency and strength of mind, to pry into

all the counsels of Heaven. The great facts of the Gospel are before us, by the mercy and favour of God; and whatever God may be pleased to do with others, that belongs unto Him; but while *we* are most clearly informed, by the infallible truth of His own declarations, that He has no pleasure in *our* death, but rather that we should come unto Him and live,—while *we* are informed that to be saved we must come unto Christ, and be made submissive to His authority and grace within us; and while converting and sanctifying power is freely offered unto us through Jesus Christ, surely if the things which are secret belong unto God, these things, which are revealed, belong unto us; and it is our duty, our wisdom, our profit, to yield a willing obedience to the voice of His gracious invitations.

But the words of our text point out to us the necessity there is that we should not be satisfied with any speculative or merely theoretic belief of the great truths of the Gospel. Having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, manifestly implies that our acts and doings should be such as are consistent with the prospects which the Gospel sets before us. We there behold, or at least are called upon to behold, God willing our everlasting happiness, the redemption of our souls from sin, and from eternal sufferings, the wages of sin, and the putting of our souls in possession of that fulness of glory and joy, and those

everlasting pleasures which are at His right hand. Nor can this be attained to, without the mind being habitually impressed with the true belief of that which God reveals to us. A belief merely in theory, an admission that the truths of the Gospel *may* indeed be realities, will not produce any Christian or consistent stability in our goings. It permits the mind to wander continually after its own idols and its foolishness, and there is not a temptation which comes, or an enticement which allures to sin, but will find a hospitable reception in the secrecies of the soul, and an actual service in the progress of our outward walk. And we would seek to remind you from this, as the very practical duty incumbent upon you, if you seek to maintain a Christian walk, to have the mind imbued continually with the living remembrance of the Word of God, as it sets forth His character, and His will towards you personally. And to this, there must be industry and activity of mind, an habitual attendance to the Scriptures of truth, not with the cold and lifeless purpose of merely considering it as a duty to read them, and that in this you do sufficiently well; but with the living desire, and the constant effort to have their truths, their doctrines, their precepts impressed upon your conscience and heart. And surely, my friends, the Spirit of God, who gives the precept of our text to each one of you, and who waits to

be gracious, to quicken and animate your souls with filial affection to God, surely He is resisted, and His teaching quenched, when you walk in habitual or frequent forgetfulness of the very means which He has provided for your use. The Scriptures testify of Christ, and in Christ God is revealed; and having His compassion and love made known to you,—then,—you cannot but seek, if indeed you believe in the truths which he brings before you,—to obey Him, in all the course of your doings. That you have to do with God, is the great lesson which the Gospel inculcates, that while He is merciful and gracious in Jesus Christ, providing and offering to you freely, the eternal inheritance of His children, His own favour and everlasting glory in Heaven; He is holy still, hating sin with a perfect hatred, and calling upon you, to perfect holiness in His own fear. Your constant effort and aim must be to carry this feeling and remembrance along with you, to have it ruling paramount in your minds; and when temptations to sin and error oppose your path, that this remembrance and feeling should bear you up against them. The unbelieving and earthly mind may indeed have its principles of uprightness and of honour, and they may serve their purpose of maintaining to a certain degree, the inward peace of the individual, so far as this world is concerned, and they may also help to promote the well-being

of society around us; but all this cannot extend farther than present and temporal interests; while this true and practical godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. And however great the peace or security may be, which mere moral principles apart from Christianity can furnish, in this life, it will leave the soul but desolate and abject, and wretched in its solemn prospect of a coming eternity. Nor is it the comparative value of mere moral principles and Christian principles which ought, even now, to determine our choice, but the higher and more solemn consideration, that God is made known to us, that He condescends to address us, and that we are not made for time but for eternity; that our relation to God, as His immortal creatures, places every other relation in a subordinate, inferior place: and what is it that can stand compared to the preparation of the Gospel of peace, which fully and freely offers unto us, to have wrought in our souls the very moral image of God; that as He first loved us, we should also love Him supremely, as He Himself is supreme; and that, as He bears in His own eternal character and government, good-will and peace towards sinners as we are, so we should be brought also to bear unfeigned love and peace and good-will towards every one individual of our brethren of mankind around us.

There is much talk in the world about benevolence and humanity, nor do we at all seek to deny but there is much of them yet in the world; and more of them exercised, we believe, than there is of gratitude in return for them:—we would present before you worldly principles, not in their weakness, but in all their strength, giving them all the tribute of praise which is justly due to them; but what are they after all, but feebleness, when our mutual interests oppose and cross each other;—they become like Samson's bands, as if they were burned with fire; but the blessed preparation of the Gospel of peace, the recognition and belief, and habitual feeling of our relation to God as a God in Christ,—this will retain the soul in subjection, and restrain the outgoings of selfishness, and of covetousness and pride; and it will withhold the mind and doings from the foul or fiery ebullitions of passion, which wound the soul itself, and render it an alien to every solid enjoyment of peace. The promises of mental peace and tranquillity which are offered to us in the Gospel, in the whole Scriptures of truth, are numerous and striking; and you will find them continually placed in connexion with trust and confidence in God. Thus the prophet Isaiah says, (xxvi. 3.) "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." And the Psalmist,

who had abundant experience of the goodness and faithfulness of God; and who, amid striking and trying vicissitudes of this life, did not let go his confidence and hope in the Lord, says, Psal. cxix. 165, "Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them." And the prophet Isaiah, again, in addressing rebellious and unbelieving Israel, says, (xlviii. 17.) "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord thy God who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way which thou shouldest go. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." The materials for such a peace are prepared for us in the Gospel of Christ, in the revelation which it fully makes of the mercy and grace of God, and concerning our everlasting prospects and interests. But what is it to us, that such preparation is made, unless we be found seeking unto it as our own personal peace, and making use of it, in all our habits and conduct, as our defence and our stay against the manifold evils which continually beset and surround us in our journey through this world of sin and vexations, to that better country which the Gospel has brought to light. "Let not your hearts be troubled," says Christ, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." That consideration

of God, or contemplation of His character, which invests Him with only the attributes of justice and power, and anger against us, can give no peace to the mind; but tribulation, and anguish, and trembling. It is such a contemplation of Him, however, to which the mind is naturally prone and inclined, and while it does succeed, on many occasions, in filling the mind with suspicion and slavish fear, it does not reprove or rebuke the power of sin in our habits. It is felt by the guilty conscience as a burden; and those who have no other religious principle but this, feeling the incumbrance of it, they strive to put it away from them;—to bury as it were, their thoughts and contemplations of God, in the rubbish of this world's drudgery and toil, and in the tumult, and hurry, and eagerness, both of their pursuits, and of their sinful gratifications. But God known in Christ, in the preparation of the Gospel of peace, is, to the believer's mind, a sun and a shield, offering and bestowing both grace and glory; and promising in His own faithfulness, that He will withhold no good thing from those who follow after Him. The preparation made for us in the Gospel, and so clearly revealed, encourages and animates the soul, thus to follow Him. In our feeling of sin and unworthiness, it reveals to us that God in Christ Jesus has made provision to secure forgiveness unto us; and as this love and grace on

His part were utterly undeserved on ours; that in all our unworthiness, He still offers pardon abundantly and freely unto us; that He will not chide continually, nor will He keep His anger for ever; but that, "as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For he knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." This true view of the character of God being received in the soul, and habitually upheld there, is to have our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and surely, this is the view which will animate the believing mind into a hatred of all sin, and to the active and faithful obedience of God. And moreover, the Gospel has prepared for you an everlasting fulness of grace in Christ Jesus, to supply every want of the soul: after such views of God as we have now mentioned *do* obtain a certain degree of holding in the mind; and desires or purposes are awakened within you to serve God in your conversation and life, you will feel your minds habitually prone to forget, and to turn away from them, and to follow renewedly after your objects of vanity, belonging to time and to sense. This departing of the heart from God, will take away

your peace of mind. But how precious is the preparation of the Gospel, when in it there is offered unto you grace, and strength, and power, to overcome this evil tendency of the heart,—power to renew you in the spirit of your mind, and to give you increased light and knowledge of God, increase of faith in His name, to kindle again your love to Him, and to bring before you more clearly and impressively the great and glorious realities of a coming eternity to which you are hastening onwards. Rest not satisfied then, even should it so *be* with you, that your understanding is convinced of the truths of the Gospel, or that you have purposes and resolutions of good. These will fail you in your time of need, without a constant and renewed application to God, through the testimony of the Gospel;—till your desires and affections of soul be quickened and put into exercise on the side of God, and for the active doing of His will, by the constant remembrance, and in the belief of His grace and love towards you in Jesus Christ. Strive to exercise reliance upon Him in your soul as the great Mediator,—the living Head of the church, who is exalted with God in the heavens, and who took unto Him your own very frame, and a soul like unto yours in all but sin,—not only that He might expiate your offences by suffering the punishment which was due to them; but that he might even live as

God and man in one person, to encourage you to come to Him, and to succour you in every time of your need.

Now, the way of God's commandment and direction for coming unto Him, is, as we have observed already, to attend to His own revelation and counsel, as manifested in the Gospel. Without this, you cannot prosper in the spiritual life. You must redouble your diligence in looking to the word of His grace and truth, and in pondering what it says to you. You must by prayer and supplication to God, seek the light, and power, and guidance of His Spirit, to come into your heart with the pure word of His testimony, that you may recognise more and more clearly the grounds, the everlasting foundation of your peace with God in Christ Jesus the Lord. Remember that it is no worthiness of yours which can procure to you these desired benefits,—that, indeed, would be placing you on a foundation of sand, or rather sinking you into the depths of a continued despair: but the eternal grace of God is the foundation to which the considering of the Scriptures and the guidance of the Spirit with them will lead your mind, and there you will obtain peace and rest.

And this leads me to remark, that the precept of our text enforces upon you one special and habitual duty—that of self-examination. To live

unacquainted with the actual state of your heart with God, is to live foolishly and unprofitably. And addressing myself to those who do care for these things, and who seek to care for them more, —do you not find testimony against yourselves in your conscience, that you daily come short in having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Have you carried daily and hourly into your actual doings, of business and conduct, and intercourse with your fellow-creatures around you, the feeling, and remembrance, and belief of the great doctrines of the Gospel of Christ? Is it not true, that at the close of every day, yea and of each hour, if you did but consider solemnly and seriously your ways, you might find, that the truths of the Gospel, its precepts, and doctrines, had been by *you* too much, if not habitually, disregarded? And vain is it for you to suppose that you can enjoy peace of conscience, or true quietness and comfort of mind, without your examining into this matter, and coming anew unto the preparation of the Gospel of peace. And at the close of each day of your life, how necessary and becoming it is, that you should retire from the world to hold converse with God and your own heart, through means of His blessed and holy word, as well as in supplication and prayer. Can you open your Bible without meeting with some testimony to remind you of the

state of your own heart, and of the obedience and love to God which you owe? And how comes it that you live in such habitual neglect of these secret and personal duties? Is it not from the prevalence of sin within you? Something always obtaining the uppermost place in the mind, which renders to you communion and intercourse with God, or even with His word, distasteful and uninviting to your mind's present desires. And when such is your state, it proclaims that the enemies of your soul have obtained an advantage over you, that instead of your feet being shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, your soul has been wounded, as if rendered lame by the briers and thorns, and the asperities met with in your spiritual path: and in point of fact, when you feel this distaste and unwillingness to hold communion with God, it proclaims loudly unto you, that you are not at peace with Him, but that you are falling or fallen into a mental state of opposition to His holy will, and to the calling with which He calls you. O, let not this then prevail; but search out the evil which has obtained a mastery over you; and in prayer to God, and with the use of His own word, applied to your conscience, you may find where the evil lies—where and how it has been, that you lost sight of the principles which ought to have guided you onwards. If you live careless of this

duty, every temptation, every trial, will wound your soul; your feet will stumble on the road of Christian duty, and the peace of God will become a stranger to your heart. You will acknowledge that, in the business of life, there is nothing more valuable than method, and regularity, and order. You who are acquainted at all with the practical affairs of life must know, that the maintaining of this requires perseverance and industry. The same happens in the spiritual affairs of the soul. And it is much to be feared, that this industry and watchfulness in spiritual matters, this looking into affairs at home, so to speak, is become too rare a habit with professing Christians, and hence their faintness and spiritual languor. There may be much talk and noise about what you hear, and what new things you read, and the new or striking ideas which may be presented before you. But what is all this, or to what can it tend; if what you hear and read do not send you to commune with your own hearts and with God! It is in *that* exercise that the soul will come, by the divine blessing of God, to know its own state, and to know the abundance of the preparation made for it in the Gospel of peace. It would be well, indeed, if what you read and heard from the Gospel, sent you back to the Gospel itself, and to seek more earnestly its application to your conscience and soul, and to the regulating with in-

creased watchfulness of your goings. Sentiment alone will not avail you, but principle, right principles with God. And reject not, we beseech you, method and order, in the affairs of your soul. Let not a day pass without your reviewing your own selves, your principles and your doings, your motives and ends of acting,—and try if they be what the Gospel of peace proclaims legitimate and good. This you will find by looking to the Gospel itself, in the preparation which it has made for you. You need scarcely be told, that regularity, and discipline, and method are the very life and soul of all operations of warfare. This world, doubtless, calls you to active exertion in its own affairs; and God commands you too to be diligent and faithful in them, according to your place and sphere. But to the busiest of you all, does not God, in His merciful providence, afford time for contemplation also? And have you not His word to come to? And, as in the business of temporal warfare, when rest from toil and action is given; as then, every individual is seen looking carefully to the state of his armour and findings, so let you, my friends, be found looking diligently to the state of your souls with God, and seeking from Him, through His word, and by prayer, the strengthening of your Christian principles—the animating and renewing of your mind in the love and obedience of Christ,

and in the doing of His holy will. Strive, contend earnestly for the faith once given unto the saints, behold in the preparation of the Gospel of peace, in the counsels it unfolds; behold there the views and principles which have ever animated the army of the faith—the true children of God. And behold in the Gospel, the glorious character of their Redeemer and yours, if so be, indeed, that you seek to serve Him. The strength and grace which He ministered to them, He has, to minister also to you; and He will not leave you comfortless. And waiting too upon Him, with His own word made a lamp to your feet and a light to your path, there is no circumstance in which His providence will place you, but there the blessed preparation of the Gospel of peace will show you the course of your duty; and when you find in your own consciousness the call of duty applied to your mind, O follow it earnestly, and be not discouraged,—for if God be for you, who can be against you? And when you feel as if spiritual strength and courage failed you, then seek unto God to minister strength to your soul. He will maintain you, and will secure your peace. And bearing upon your mind, and in the actual experience of your heart, the views of God which the preparation of His Gospel unfolds, you will not only feel that He can and does sustain your lot; but that nothing can befall you which He

has not ordered for your ultimate good and happiness: and even in the times of your sorest perils, and trials, and straits, you will experience the truth of the faithful promise of God your Saviour: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

SERMON V.

EPHES. vi. 15.

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

IN already addressing you from these words, we endeavoured to bring before you the importance of the precept which they contain;—we attempted an explanation of the figure under which the precept is conveyed, and to suggest to you the necessity of its being realized in your own daily and habitual experience. The Gospel of peace, we understand to have a special reference to that peace with God, of which the Gospel of Christ provides the means, and of which it makes so clear an exhibition and offer. This same apostle elsewhere denominates it "the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." To have the feet shod with the preparation of this Gospel, we endeavour-

ed to show, implied, that the knowledge and true belief, and remembrance of this, must be carried with us into the actual goings and conduct of life. And, as means towards this, we took occasion to commend to your conscience the habitual study of the word of God, wherein His character is revealed, and His will set before you; with a careful and watchful and repeated examination into the state of your own hearts with regard to the doctrines, and precepts, and counsels of the word of God; and an habitual contemplation of the prospects which that word unfolds to you. Without serious attention to all this, the soul can never be prepared to run with patience the race set before it. And it is through those means that the Spirit of God usually works, in quickening, and animating, and elevating the mind of the believer, into a state both of confidence in God and of love to Him, and of spiritual ability and strength to overcome the obstacles and temptations which oppose the Christian's way Zionward. These are the enemies of the soul, together with its own evil, sinful inclinations and leanings, inherent in it by original sin, and strengthened by the wiles and devices of the great adversary of God and men. To specify the difficulties and trials which must be met with in a course of life such as the Gospel of peace calls us unto, would be a task to which no human ability is adequate, because no

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human experience can embrace them all in the way of practical knowledge regarding them. Nor is it by any theoretic description of them, that the true Christian must be guided. It must be by his actually meeting with them himself, and feeling their nature and power: nor will any description of them beforehand, of itself, strengthen his soul to contend with them, or to overcome them, so much as his having his soul imbued and pervaded by the preparation of the Gospel of peace,—the knowledge and experience of its truth and excellency, in its doctrines and in its offers and prospects.

But our observations were formerly confined to that view of this subject which refers especially to our relation with God. We must, however, remember, that the Gospel of Christ includes in itself a preparation which is calculated also to furnish the mind with those right and healthful principles which must guide the Christian in his relations with men. And as we formerly took occasion to mention, we would now again maintain, and seek to impress upon each one of you, that mere principles, or as they should rather be called maxims, of morality, separated from the great doctrines of the Gospel of peace, are totally inadequate to the fulfilling of those duties which we owe to our brethren of mankind around us, in all our relations, and spheres, and employments of life. Such maxims will scarcely afford, how-

ever rigidly maintained, even a peace of mind in this life. They will penetrate no deeper into the heart, the seat of every affection and purpose, than to leave it continually exposed to the temptations and power of selfishness, and of numerous evil passions, which, when indulged, rob man of his own internal peace, and destroy the peace and happiness of many others around him.

It would be unnecessary labour to go into proof with persons acquainted with the Gospel record, to establish, that a disposition or temper of charity and love towards our brethren of mankind, forms a constituent part of Gospel duty and privilege. This must be very manifest to all of you who have even an ordinary acquaintance with the word of God. A peaceful and benevolent temper of mind towards all, is recommended in the Gospel as forming an essential part of the Christian character, without the cultivation of which, there can, in fact, be no true Christianity at all. It is very true, that on this ground the Gospel of peace has been charged by its enemies, though most unfairly, with the shortcomings and errors of those who profess a belief of it, and an obedience to its precepts. And there is no denying the mournful fact, that among professing Christians, both as communities, and sects, and individuals, there has been, and still is, much of a contrary temper displayed. But this arises surely

not from any deficiency in the Gospel revelation and scheme of doctrine; far less can it arise from any countenance given there, to hostility, or personal enmity, or strife, or variance,—all these are in the Gospel reproved, and motives offered, to avoid them. The exhibition of such blemishes in the character of those who profess, and even of those who embrace it, arises from their coming short of the precept and duty of our text; their souls being but imperfectly imbued with the doctrines and truths it contains, being too much unoccupied with the glorious prospects which it brings to light. But neither must we forget, that while the Gospel inculcates the temper we speak of, towards all men, it inculcates also a steadiness of resistance to sin, and a separation from sinners, and a showing forth of our disapprobation of sin and unholiness in every way in which these may be manifested among unbelievers. And it is but true, that no small proportion of the outcry which is made in the world against the character and conduct of true Christians, arises from unbelievers, from their feeling their own sinfulness reproved and reprobated by the true followers of Christ. Many, also, embrace the outward profession of the Gospel, who have never in reality known or believed its doctrines at all, and who are in their experience, consequently, ignorant wholly of its power in the soul. Such persons mingling

themselves with the true church of Christ, as the tares with the wheat, cause two evils,—a bad report of Christianity among those who are almost or wholly its avowed enemies, and an appearance of strife and contention among its professors or believers generally; when, in point of fact, the strife or contention is between light and darkness,—between Christ and Belial. While the true believer contends, and righteously contends, against the evils, and evil measures pursued by those of the same name with him, but not of the same spirit, he gets credit, or rather indeed discredit, from the world for having enmity against their persons, and often against their interests, when he may be bearing towards them all the while, but compassion and kindness. All this must be taken into account in forming a proper estimate of thetemper and character frequently exhibited by professing Christians. But taking the matter at its worst, such exhibitions on the part of those who profess the Gospel, can never protect from condemnation those who reject it, and who would seek to make apology of such differences, for standing off from the Christian name and communion themselves. The excuse thus frequently made and vaunted, for not professing godliness, or rather for not embracing the truth, carries on its very front much that is not only unfair, but also unmanly. Look to the Gospel itself, and study it; and by doing so, you

only would act with bare common honesty. To vilify a person unheard in his own defence, is both unfair and unmanly. At least, then, give the Gospel of Christ this benefit. You can only, who demur to it, act a consistent part in your slighting of it, by frankly confessing what is but the truth, that you dislike it wholly, and that you desire not to have any thing to do with it. But you who deny the Gospel, if such there be in our hearing, we do charge you with acting an unmanly part, yea, we convict you of moral cowardice on your own showing. Were we to point out to you some great and surpassing temporal benefit or prize,—to tell you that it lay within the reach of your energies to secure it, and to show you a number of persons striving to gain it, but who seemed as if failing in the attempt, from some errors or failure of proper spirit or courage in their pursuit of it, but that, still, the competition was open and free to you,—supposing that you had no other prospect of securing your own comfort or independence in life, than to make at least the attempt, how would you spurn away from your very society, the man of paltry spirit who dared not to face an enemy, or to contend with a rival;—by how many a hard name would you not asperse and deride him! Yet we tell you, from the Gospel of peace, of the prize of immortality and glory in heaven—we tell you of a renovation of soul,

into moral and holy beauty, which the Gospel of peace offers to you,—you turn upon us and say, We cannot see this exemplified in those who profess the Gospel belief, and who call themselves its followers; therefore, we will not try the matter at all—it is needless,—*they* have not attained it—of course we need not try it. And is this all your boasted spirit and courage? Is this your manly bearing as a moral creature of God? We must not let you go with this remark,—for you will not deny but you esteem the prize. You *would* wish to die the death of the righteous. You *would* wish to be secure from the wrath to come, of which a guilty conscience *does* give you some fiery forebodings already; and yet you will not so much as summon up one effort of moral courage to look the matter in the face; you seek to protect your guilty soul under the shelter of a vaunted apology, when your very consciousness proclaims to you, that a deficiency of will, of purpose, of resolution and spirit, so to speak, scares you away from the undertaking. Nor can we leave you here, without yet reminding you, that a darker feature of your moral weakness still, is, the feeling that a mere study or looking at the word of God would awaken your feelings of guilt, and would bring many a lashing of conscience to fall with wounding severity on your guilty spirit, for the deeds of ungodliness wherein you have been

a party; and to avoid this present pain, surely in a spirit of mental cowardice indeed, you will not even look to the healing and purifying doctrines of the cross of Christ, nor seek the perfect remedy which the Gospel of peace proposes. Alas, this is worse than folly;—it is worse than the hardest name we can give to it, when we look to the eternal misery into which you are rushing, or to the immortal glory which you cast away from you. O, my friends, if you be in our hearing who thus discard all considering of the Gospel of peace,—and for the wretched reasons which we now have testified, and which we are persuaded you cannot deny; summon for once your mind to the subject, in the exercise of your rational powers which God in His long-suffering still grants to you; and reflect what is the issue to which this course of conduct must lead you! If there be an eternity, a heaven or a hell, surely it is your business now to attend to the communications which God has made to you; the very peradventure, that even there *may* be such realities, ought in sober reason to make you act a more courageous and becoming part, than thus to flee from God, because you feel you deserve His wrath: or because you fear to encounter His voice addressing your soul. Think of your state, if this be the condition in which you shall meet with God in judgment! And come, we would beseechingly intreat you, come to the

word of God, with purpose to know and learn its declarations of mercy and peace to your souls;—and to learn that there is indeed reality in what you hitherto would seek to persuade yourselves was but a thing of nought, or a matter of doubt; of this you cannot yet persuade yourselves, notwithstanding your efforts at a total unbelief and hardening of heart,—that there is no such thing as the solemn realities of eternity; for there are times and hours at which you are forced, however unwillingly, to believe in some sense, that there are such things. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, while it is yet called to-day. Come unto Him, confessing your sins, and seeking to know the covenant of His peace; and God will yet have mercy upon you, for He will abundantly pardon.

But to return. We were advancing the proposition, that a peaceful and benevolent temper of mind was uniformly inculcated in the Gospel, as an essential part of the true Christian character. And we would observe now, that to the attainment and exercise of this, the words of our text call every believer on Christ, with respect to their fellow-creatures. The Gospel of peace, in its preparation on the part of God, and as freely offered to sinners, is the only source from which this temper of mind can be derived and truly sustained in the soul, and exemplified in the conduct.

We know well that there are individuals naturally possessing a more peaceful, calm, and benevolent temper than others; and persons who outwardly, as far as seen by men, may hold on the tenor of their way in this life, free from strife and open enmities and personal wranglings. But with all this on their side, when examined by the rule of God's word and law, even they do come far short indeed of having, in this respect, their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. They still have, as their partialities, so also their private dislikes and their personal antipathies and prejudices and coldnesses. These they have with respect to many individuals, and perhaps not the least worthy. But with respect to all, and in a universal sense, with all this outward peacefulness, there may be a total, or a very great and deeply impressed habit of indifference to the actual interests of their fellow-men, in that spirit of active benevolence which the Gospel of peace inculcates. I may fancy I wish my neighbour well and happy, when I would dislike exceedingly to put forth a helping hand to him in time of his need; and if ever I did stretch it out towards him, it might be in such a manner as to have the first and strongest consideration ruling within me, how little I might do it with;—and how little I might bestow, to maintain my good name with him and with others; I might look first, in short, not to his wants, but

to my own interests, lest I might in any way be in danger of committing, or encroaching upon them. This is not a true benevolence of temper—it is not the benevolence of the Gospel of peace. The benevolence of the Christian temper proceeds upon considerations of a higher and purer kind. The believer is taught of God to know his own unworthiness of the benefits which God confers upon him: this unworthiness, on his own part, he has constant experience of, it is not with him mere theory; and feeling his own obligations to the sparing and upholding mercy of God, and to that Almighty and bountiful hand which sustains and multiplies his privileges and his comforts; and feeling much more than this, his obligations to divine grace, to the everlasting love of God in Christ, for the blessings of salvation to his own needy and perishing soul, he is made willing to communicate according as God has prospered him. The true Christian's temper, in this respect, is not that spirit of mind, which even performs acts of charity under the impressions made by a scene of distress or suffering, or want; it is not confined to this: but it is that habit of mind which cherishes, continually, favour and kindness to all,—feeling himself indebted and responsible to God for his use of all the mercies received from Him. It is a recognition and knowledge of God as He is in Christ providing and offering you the benefits of

the Gospel's salvation, which will originate and uphold this spirit of mind within you. Nor is it by any means confined to the practice of alms-deeds and liberality in the good things of this life. It looks to the higher and more enduring interests of men; the believer having impressed on his own mind the unspeakable importance of the soul's salvation, the preciousness and glory of those blessings which constitute that salvation, and the destitution of men, while they are ignorant of them, he will strive to be instrumental in doing to all his fellow-sinners around him all the good that he can, by commending to their conscience and heart the calling of God in Christ, and the graces and virtues of the spiritual life. And having the feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, is to bear about with you into all the duties and business of this life, this temper of mind; putting on continually this bond of charity, which attaches the true believer in love and kindness to his brethren of mankind, in every relation in which he meets with them, or in which they can either be witnesses of his principles, or sharers in the influence which a godly example possesses. It is this temper and habitual feeling which will restrain the selfish and unholy passions of men, and which will produce, wherever it is manifested, in some degree, even in a sensible and known degree, peace and good will among

those who are near to you. And how can such a temper and spirit of mind be established in the individual, but by learning its lessons in your knowledge of God, as the author of salvation in Christ Jesus; and in looking unto Him, the perfect and adorable pattern of every virtue and grace, manifested in this life, to leave us an example that we might follow His steps. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. We must be partakers of His spirit, ere we can show forth its fruits in our continual habits and goings. And the diligent and earnest use of the doctrines of the Gospel, in your own spiritual affairs, will tend to produce in your souls this temper of mind. You will indeed meet with many obstacles and hindrances to its cultivation in the intercourse of life with others; in the insensibility and hardness of heart, in the unthankfulness and deceit of those whose good you wish to promote; but the true Christian in such cases, numerously as they may occur to him, has such knowledge of his own heart, and such a feeling of the evil which reigns by nature there, with reference to God, that all the perverseness, and ingratitude, and oppositions of ungodly men, will not surprise him, nor will they hinder the continued action of that true and comprehensive benevolence which the Gospel of peace inculcates upon every believer. And farther, the know-

ledge and experience of the grace of the Gospel —the having of your feet shod with its preparation, will uphold this temper of mind in your prosecution of all your own worldly interests. The royal law of charity, and righteousness, and peace, the doing unto all as you would seek that all should do unto you, can be only attained to in the belief and reception of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. Worldly policy and wisdom may indeed dictate to you many of its acts, in certain circumstances and affairs of life, for it is even the interest of men in this life, that it should be observed; but the temper of mind, from which it would invariably flow, can only be learned in the school of Christ, under the teaching of His Spirit's power. And it is when the believer meets with injury and oppression, with over-reaching and craft, and deceit in others, that he will feel peculiarly the need he has of living near to God in communion and intercourse of soul with *Him*, that this temper of mind may still be upheld; and that those passions of the natural mind, which would seek to return evil for evil may be subdued, and the soul freed from their power. These are deeply established in the natural heart: and nothing assuredly, but the preparation of the Gospel of peace, the reception and experience of its glorious doctrines, will overcome and put them away. Nor can it be but observed, by any intel-

ligent mind, conversant with the scenes of life, how the world is filled and polluted by miserable exhibitions of the power of such unholy passions and feelings. Even when they do not break forth into open deeds of violence or misrule, how manifold are the grudgings, and envies, and jealousies, and evil surmisings, between man and man, which may be detected in the outwardly quiet and sober current of your lives; and, alas! much to be seen and felt and deplored, on the part of those who make profession of the truth. My brethren, these things ought not so to be: and question you your own conscience on the subject, whether they be not found with you. They come not from above, but are earthly, sensual, devilish; and how could they maintain still an ascendency over you, but as the evil and bitter fruit of your living as strangers to God; and were there no other enemies of the soul,—no other obstacles to the maintenance of a godly life, than the power of such evil affections and passions within you, it were abundantly more than enough, to make the warning necessary to you, that you strive more and more earnestly still, to have your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. For it is this which alone can restrain the working of such evil in your own minds, and which can withhold you in your goings from giving to such evils an embodying of them into

action. Is there not need, then, that you should strive to walk continually in the light of the knowledge of His glory, who abundantly and freely forgiveth your own trespasses, and who has borne even until now with all your rebelliousness against Himself, of which you have been so deeply guilty; and whose everlasting love continues to offer to you, notwithstanding your ingratitude hitherto, all the blessedness and glory of an eternity with Himself. Considering Christ, the great High Priest of your profession, is the antidote to these evils of soul; and waiting upon Him for the ministration of His Spirit, which would support you in every hour of temptation and trial, and in the manifold provocations which you may from day to day receive, in your intercourse with the profane and ungodly around you. Let your principles of Christian knowledge and faith, shine forth in your actual progress and habits of life; and assuredly this would do more, under the blessing of God, to curb and restrain the evil temper of others, and to make them consider their own ways, than all other means which *men* can institute for the bettering of the world around you.

The preparation of the Gospel of peace, when thus put on, even as shoes on the feet, to maintain and uphold your soul in a becoming temper and frame, worthy of your profession, will man-

ifest its own power and its own beauty, in promoting your peace within, and in making even your enemies to be at peace with you. The evils seen and manifested in the conduct and character of others, have but little power indeed to wound the internal peace of that mind which is thus habitually furnished with Gospel feelings, and motives, and views; while the peace and comfort of the unbeliever, of the worldly man, lie exposed to every encroachment and inroad which the provocations, and folly, and perverseness of others may choose to make upon them.

The promoting of peace and good will upon earth ought to be habitually the believer's study: and while he does walk in the light of God's countenance, in the knowledge and belief of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, his inclinations of soul will be towards this. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." And does not the very precept of our text remind you, my friends, of the duty which is incumbent upon you as those who profess the Gospel of Christ;—to be found in all your intercourse with men, promoting this peace, which ought to dwell and reign among all those who profess the same Lord, and who seek the same salvation. And there is no one, however limited or humble their sphere, but may be promoters of such a peace. You can cease surely from inflam-

ing the evil passions of sinners, in your intercourse with them. You can surely cease from promoting and circulating from one to another those evil surmises, and those little and angry remarks, those censorious words, which you may hear spoken. And you can do more; you can also reprove them, if not by the voice of correction, surely by manifesting your disapprobation of such things. Justice may indeed require that you be faithful to your brethren and neighbours, in administering those cautions and warnings which may deliver them from dangers, and snares, and loss. But let this, when unavoidable, be done in a spirit of Christian meekness, and of godly forbearance and wisdom. If there be one practical lesson more than another to be derived from the words of our text, it is that the tongue be restrained. Behold how great a fire a small spark kindleth. And never shall it be restrained and made subject to righteousness and truth, in charity, until the heart be purified; for from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And while the Gospel of Christ reveals, that for every word which you speak you must give account to God, what need is there that you should live and speak, habitually realizing His omniscient presence, and so demeaning yourselves as those who know and feel that they must give this account unto Him. But

the constrained and unwilling yoke of obedience, which principles of worldly prudence and policy will impose, is not that which the Christian is called upon to bear. He must learn of Christ, and seek His divine and holy temper of mind. His temper of love and forbearance, and good will to men; and then the peace of the Gospel towards you will reign in your heart towards others, and it will be your study and earnest desire to seek and pursue it. To the cultivation of this temper there are numerous obstacles which will seek to obstruct your daily and habitual progress. Your natural tendencies to earthly things, will, if allowed to reign over you, and to subject your soul to their power, betray you continually into denials in practice of Gospel rules, and to an overlooking and forgetting of Gospel motives. O seek then to walk in the light of God, to look to that inheritance unto which the Gospel calls you, and to the obtaining of which, it makes for you so abundant a preparation of peace. With your minds set upon it, your conversation will be in heaven, and God Himself, as manifested in Christ, will be seen and known of you, as your exceeding great reward. Your soul will desire conformity to Him in His imitable perfections; and you will desire it as your very enjoyment and peace, to be found in the exercise of those graces which prepare the soul for the

enjoying of His eternal and glorious kingdom. Temptations will undoubtedly continue to assail you; but let your feet stand on the foundation of Gospel principles, and, acknowledging in your own heart the truth and preciousness of the Gospel's heavenly and gracious call, you will feel strength ministered to your soul, to withstand temptation, and to overcome it, and to preserve a conscience at peace both with God and with men. And the encouragements which are given you in the Gospel of peace,—let them strengthen you continually in the doing and enduring of the will of God. His own faithful promises are numerous, and clear, and explicit, and you must be found continually considering them, that you may have fortitude and spiritual courage in every season of evil and danger. He promises to maintain your cause, and to work mightily for you,—to minister unto you according to your need, understanding, and wisdom, and guidance. Remember that the rule of His word is given you,—that it is put into your hands, and that He offers and promises, the heart to receive and regard it, the mind to consider. Him continually who hath given it you as His own, and whose Almighty power in providence is on your side to establish your goings. Bear upon your spirit unceasingly,—strive earnestly to bear it,—the remembrance and feeling of the grace and mercy of God

in Christ, His forgiveness of your trespasses, and His free and full offer of his choicest blessings to your soul throughout an endless eternity. This will maintain you; and in all your trials and temptations to sin, in all provocations to wrath and to enmity, call to mind your own debt to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the example of His forgiving and forbearing spirit which He hath left you that you might follow it; and no cry unto Him for aid will pass unnoticed, in His spiritual government of the world and His church. He will consider your need; and will supply your wants as the God of grace and truth, faithful in covenant; and while those who know Him not, fall into snares and sorrows, and wound their own souls, let your record be on high, and he will maintain your goings in that peace and comfort of heart which are unspeakable and full of glory.

SERMON VI.

EPHES. vi. 16.

Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

IN these words, it is almost unnecessary to remark, that there is a continuation still of the same figure which is employed in the verses immediately preceding. The believer's duties and trials are compared to those which are incident to temporal warfare: and the graces of the Christian's spiritual life and character are also compared to those weapons necessary to the successful prosecution of such a warfare. While this comparison is instituted and maintained in the context and text, there is made to us the most explicit and impressive intimation, that the duties, and trials, and dangers of the Christian life, are as real and actual in their kind and degree, as those which are sensibly and corporeally to be met with, endured,

and overcome, in worldly war, by those personally engaged in its arduous and trying details. The means of safety and victory are here with clearness set before us: and as it will not suffice to the soldier, either for his own personal safety, or for the honour and interest of his sovereign's government, that weapons are prepared for his use, unless he actually assume and wield them; neither will it suffice to the Christian in *his* actual goings, that the weapons of his spiritual strength and security are provided and offered: he must come to the everlasting fulness in which they are stored, and must be supplied from out of it; and the supply he receives must be actively employed for the end and purpose in view. The grace, or the living principle of faith in the soul, is spoken of in the words of our text, as a most essential part of the Christian's spiritual armour. And we would remark at the outset, and beseech you to observe, that it is spoken of as a grace which must be *taken unto* you, or *by* you. It is prepared for your use; it is freely offered; but this will not suffice, unless you actually do take and receive it. Nor even is your receiving of it sufficient; you must have it habitually in exercise, because, such are your spiritual circumstances, that you have constant unceasing need of it. The end for which it is given, is here stated to be, that you may be able to quench the fiery darts

of the wicked. Nor can you be ignorant, if acquainted with the testimony of scripture, that the wicked one, the great enemy of God and men, is represented as an unceasingly active and assiduous foe; by power, by stratagem, and by weapons of warfare suited to *his own* destructive ends, incessantly endeavouring to overcome and destroy each one of the children of God. It is not, then, the occasional admission into your mind of the great doctrines and truths of salvation, which will preserve your soul in safety: it is not the turning of the mind unto them occasionally, or at stated seasons, with whatever solemnity, which can deliver you, or ensure your spiritual well-being; but your habitually living and breathing, so to speak, in the actual element of a believing and spiritually enlightened mind,—having clear and established views, by faith ruling, influential, and predominant with you,—having the very objects which that grace or principle in the soul, reveals to it, continually in your view: this is, in point of fact, what is equivalent to the taking, and putting on, and wielding, of the shield, "by which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

It may have occurred to some of you in considering the words of our text, that, from the phraseology employed, there is some such meaning, as if there were a comparison instituted be-

tween the value of faith, as a weapon of spiritual warfare, and the other graces mentioned in our preceding context;—it being said, "*above all*" taking the shield of faith, as if faith were above all, or surpassingly, the necessary weapon in the warfare referred to. Such a conclusion, indeed, is not widely astray from the truth, for assuredly, as we hope to show, faith is the primary grace in the soul, which is the means of its becoming interested in every other spiritual blessing pertaining to salvation; but, in our context and text, it is the exercise or use of the several graces mentioned, which is dwelt upon, and not the essential qualities of the graces themselves: and in course of the believer's spiritual warfare, and his journeying heavenward, there are other graces equally necessary and useful as faith. In our worldly condition, it will not be questioned but the vital principle or element of life, is the means on the continuance of which every action and every enjoyment depends. But mere life itself will not suffice to our temporal profit or good: other faculties and powers ministered through the principle of life, must be continually exercised; and so, in the spiritual life, other graces, as faith, are equally necessary to the soul's well-being. And in the words of our text, it is most obvious, that there is no comparison instituted at all, between the relative value of faith, and the other

graces previously spoken of; on the contrary, each of them is represented as equally necessary and valuable in its own place. The inspired writer had been speaking, in the preceding verses, of certain other defensive armour which must be put on, as necessary and essential parts of the warrior's findings, and he comes now to assign its own proper place and use to the grace of faith. He tells us, that this shield is to be placed above the other weapons, or, more literally, *upon* them; and without doubt, the translation into our language would have been equally accurate and complete, if rendered thus, *Upon* all these, taking the shield of faith; that is, upon all these which have been mentioned already, take, and place, and use, the shield of faith; for as you need to have the girdle of truth upon you, the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, so you must have, placed *upon* these additionally, the shield of faith, as a separate and equally essential means of defence. You stand continually exposed to the fiery darts of the wicked. The portions of your armour already described will not, of themselves, protect your *whole* person; those darts which are aimed at you, without the shield actually being put on and employed, will reach and penetrate the vital parts of the soul.

There are obviously demanding our attention in

these words, two especial things: first, the shield of faith; and, secondly, the uses or ends assigned it.

In addressing you now on the former of these two heads of discourse, our endeavour shall be, in dependance upon divine aid, to explain the practical meaning of the term employed, by bringing before you the reasons why the grace of faith is called a shield, and why it must come to be actually employed as such, by every true Christian. We shall attempt to show you these reasons from the nature of faith itself, as a vital principle in the soul. We freely confess that we find this the most difficult part by far of our context and text, in explaining and commending to you the whole armour of God; not from any hesitation or doubts we have upon the subject, but from its very importance, and from the difficulty which must always attach to the following out of a subject, in making it clear to others, when we call upon the mind to attend exclusively to its own workings internally, and to carry on a train of reasoning, of which the workings of mind are exclusively the subject. But I do deem it the shortest and the surest process to make my appeals to your own conscious feelings and experience; and I solemnly beseech you, addressing you as immortal beings, and for eternity, to consider the statements, simple as they may be, which I attempt to bring under your view.

I make one initial or prefatory remark, namely, that we hold the grace of faith to be the gift of God, not originating or springing up naturally in the mind of man, but communicated unto it by an exercise of power, on the part of an almighty and gracious Creator.

And I make a second remark, or statement, which I would beg you to keep in view, that I hold the grace or principle of faith to be in every respect equivalent to a new additional sense or power bestowed upon the mind.

And, now, my friends, I would just ask you individually one question. Do you habitually feel that you have the capacity, or power, or *will*, to be employed in the contemplation of God, and of spiritual objects? You cannot surely be ignorant that the mind which is in you naturally possesses the quality of incessant activity or movement; that, however vain, or frivolous, or fanciful may be the subjects on which the mind is employed, there is continually, in your waking hours, some kind of activity; in other words, the mechanism of thought, and mental sensation, and perception, is scarcely, if ever, at rest. It may indeed weary of certain specific objects, and with reference to *them*, it may become languid, or dull, or lifeless seemingly; but immediately then, almost without your perceiving it, something else is presented, and made choice of, and thought

is exercised upon it, and mental sensation has its renewed exercise. The quickness or rapidity of thought and mental sensation is a matter to which we can apply no calculation or measurement. The very lightning of heaven is but *slow* in its movements compared to the process of thought. The ordinary operations of visible nature are but as tardiness itself,—even the progress and swiftness of light, the quickest movement in nature of which we have knowledge, cannot once be compared to the incalculable swiftness of thought. Now, in all this marvellous working of mind,—and we inquire not now, in what manner employed, whether righteously or sinfully,—do you not fix your attention, times without number, on subjects of thought which you do not thoroughly or well understand? Other habitual subjects of thought there are, which you do understand sufficiently, or at least to your own satisfaction. Subjects of habitual thought, and regarding which we aver, that the mind is incessantly employed, may be divided into four different classes. 1st, Those which we understand, and of which we can examine in thought the various properties. 2d, Those which we cannot thoroughly or satisfactorily understand, the several properties of which are not cognizable by, or palpable to our acuteness of mental powers. 3dly, Taking subjects of thought indiscriminately, from out of the

two classes mentioned, we may constitute a third, —subjects of thought which are to us disagreeable uninviting, painful, or fearful; and yet towards which your mind will frequently resort. And, 4*thly*, there is a class of objects taken from out of the first two, which are pleasing, and interesting, and engaging to the affections and desires of every individual mind, according to its own peculiar constitution and structure. Now, looking, each of you, to your own past and present history of mind, in which of the classes of objects mentioned would you feel entitled, regarding yourself, to place God? Supposing it not only possible, but actually accomplished, that by some certain process external of your mental processes wholly, and still more infinitely rapid than your swiftest movement of thought, that there was a record written of every movement of mind within you, and that this book were now published before you; what proportion, think you, would your thoughts of God and spiritual matters be found to bear to all your other thoughts? O, how small would it be with many! and in what class of objects would it be found? Admitting, that in such a summary of your mental procedures there were found the name of God now and then set down, in what section or portion of this history would it be found,—among the subjects which you understood, or those which you did

not understand?—among the subjects which were to you disagreeable, uninviting, painful, or fearful; or among those which were habitually to you pleasing, interesting, and engaging? If you consider this matter with due and solemn regard, we fear, that on such a scrutiny, the character of many would come out, as having been but little imbued with thoughts or considerations of God: and would you not have cause to fear, that where such thoughts were found, few and far between as they were, God was present to your mind as one of the objects not understood, and one of those also, of all others, which was to you the least inviting, and the least desired. You will meet us here perhaps with the argument—"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." We freely admit the full force of the argument. It is unanswerable. Frail man, at his best estate here, and perhaps at his best estate hereafter, cannot have a perfect or full knowledge of God, who is infinite, while eternity itself lasts, permitting His redeemed to behold Him! But by this very argument we arrive at a most important fact respecting the human mind in its natural estate; and remember we speak to

you personally. If you assign to God such a place in your mind, that He has been, and is to you, in the number of those objects not sufficiently understood;—and can you deny but such is the fact?—then how comes it that your thoughts of Him have been of so small a number? where is your defence for this? It has not been so with respect to innumerable other objects which you admit that you do not fully understand. Surely it must be, that you saw not in God, that you esteemed not, in point of fact, to be connected with God, anything at all supremely deserving your regard or your knowledge. If this be a defence, doubtless you are entitled to it; but it is a wretched defence! But the truth is, you have none else to set up, for your own history condemns you; your thoughts of God have been but miserably few and scattered; and that one fact, compared with the history of your mind in other respects, brings you in convicted of having no faith in God. We have another argument to contend with. Faith, some will tell us, is merely belief; and we may be in a believing state, though our thoughts of God, we allow, have been but comparatively few. Now, if you give due heed to the subject, on rational principles, you must grant that this is no tenable ground on which to find security. Granting, which we do merely to meet your reasoning, and to show you its error,

that faith is merely belief;—belief in any thing whatever, must surely imply *some* degree of knowledge concerning it. Now, observe, we adhere to the view already brought out, that your thoughts of God have been comparatively few at the best. Then, are you prepared to say, that you know so much of God and His character, that your knowledge prevents the necessity of your thinking more frequently of Him? In other words, have you such knowledge of God, as renders unnecessary to you any process of thought regarding Him? You will scarcely venture this length in defending your state of mind with respect to God; and the truth is, that no such state of mind could exist. Knowledge of every kind is acquired by the very exercise of thought; and the single fact brought out in your mental history, (and let your own conscience be judge if it be not established regarding *you,*) that your mind has been so much a blank with respect to God, proves to demonstration that you have not knowledge of Him; and therefore no rational or true belief.

But we have another argument yet to combat, and a very important one. You will tell us perhaps, We assuredly believe that God is, and therefore, have we not faith in God? I answer distinctly to this, that the mere believing, or rather the assenting to the bare proposition, that God exists, is *not* faith in God. Believing in an abstract

proposition or truth is altogether different from faith. In the same manner you believe that two and two make four. This is a truth, but a truth of no such interest as to keep your mind exercised regarding it; and in the same manner, such a belief in God, as you maintain to be faith, brings not your mind into any practical intercourse with God. It lies in the mind as a dormant thing altogether. It places not God before you as any distinct object of recognition or thought; and surely it requires no demonstration to show you, that such a species of belief could never be a shield to the soul in the business of an actual spiritual warfare.

There is one other argument on this subject to which we must allude. It is the argument of those who maintain that they believe in God, from what proofs and evidences they behold in the works of nature around them, altogether independently of the Scriptures. That this is not the faith spoken of in our text, may be made abundantly manifest; and that it is not with such persons, any practical faith, habitually exercised by them. We observe, that such a species of belief does not bring them to seek knowledge of God, or to honour and obey Him, as a Being in whom they profess to believe. The fact, so frequently adverted to already, comes broadly forth in their mental history, and experience, and consciousness,—their

thoughts of God are few. You profess to believe in certain of His attributes; but even allowing that your conclusions and views of those attributes were just, the views which you have regarding Him, constrain you not into the actual business of reverencing and obeying Him as God. He is not present to your thoughts habitually; but only when it suits your humour or fancy to admit an occasional thought that there is some such being as a great and powerful Creator. But the whole aspect of your mind's history is widely astray from God; and while you profess to admit the belief of His existence as the God of nature, it will be found that you consider Him not practically as the author of nature's gifts and bounties to *you;* these set you the more upon honouring and prizing the bounty itself, and not upon adoring and honouring the bestower. You cannot, if you be in our hearing, deny, but such is the tendency and strong leaning of your heart and mind. You cannot affirm that your object has been, or is, to glorify and obey God. Other objects and views have the entire and undivided ascendency over you; and therefore it is but too abundantly clear, that believing as you profess to do in God, you exclude Him carefully from a government over yourselves in your heart and mind. That such is the state and character of those who profess to believe in the God of nature

merely, is made clear by the testimony and experience which they have uniformly, themselves, in every generation, put on record; and too often has it been proven true, in the lives which they lived, and in the wretched deaths which they died. The very nature of such a belief puts God at a distance from you; and in times of distress, or peril, or anguish, it must leave the individual as floating loose, a worthless unnoticed atom on the current or billows of time, without a God reigning or ruling for *him*, to protect or uphold him: —instead of its being a shield to that individual's soul to protect him from evil, it must be as a weight upon him to crush him down to the ground; and in the prospect of eternity, when the wakening spirit will at last begin to behold the dread realities that are there, it will leave the soul as tempest-shaken, afraid to move, and yet overwhelmed with terror at being constrained to depart.

Now, this brings us, in conclusion on this part of our subject, to make one other appeal to you. You may be, and I fear you are, numerous in our hearing, who set up perhaps none of the more systematic arguments for yourselves which we have now been noticing; but you put in the vague and general plea, that you have knowledge sufficient of God, as much, or more perhaps, you will say, than some others who make more show and noise on the subject. But observe here, we

entreat you, that we are not comparing our individual knowledge or faith with another's at all. You say that you believe in God, and have knowledge of Him. We ask you, where have you received it? Is it from the word of God? Will you say that it is? We doubt not you will feel disposed to put in the plea, that it is. Let us examine your plea, then;—if it be a good one, it cannot be the worse for being tried. Well,—are you certain that every opinion and view you have on the subject is founded on the authority of God's word? Have you satisfied yourself of this, in your own conscience and heart? Are you sure there is nothing in the whole compass of divine truth to refute and condemn your opinions and views? If you be sure there is not, surely you must have bestowed considerable industry and pains on the subject. Are you conscious of having done so? Or do you do it still? If you be neither, we charge you openly and at once with acting a vain and imprudent, a rash and unreasonable part. You have adopted opinions, without any sufficient evidence regarding their correctness or soundness;—and joining to this, the other melancholy fact, which you yourselves cannot but know to be manifest in the history of your mind's workings, that your thoughts and meditations of God are few; and it will come out in yours, just as clearly as in the history of others,

that in very deed, you are not believing in God at all,—for you have not true knowledge concerning His character and perfections. And *this* truth regarding you, may well come home to your own conscience, that, instead of having faith in God, you *seek not* to know Him, or to be acquainted with His will or His ways. Do you seek such knowledge? Do you strive to attain it? What efforts do you make for it? What mental labour do you bestow upon it? Now, if none, surely there must be something essentially wrong with you. Admitting that God is, which you profess to admit,—then, the very chance or probability, that one ten thousandth part of what the Bible tells you concerning God is true, just ought to be *as many thousand* times more than sufficient, to make the most careless sinner on earth, an earnest and humble inquirer into a knowledge of His character, and government, and will. On this principle you would act, and you *do act*, in all matters belonging to the life that now is, and its interests. Say that any object of gain, any advantage is set before you, and the means of your attaining it: you are not *sure* of success; but let there be an opening, a *probability* of your success, and on the strength of that probability alone, you raise your schemes, and you diligently prosecute them. And in the same manner too, if you be warned of a coming danger, and if you

apprehend it, let even the mere probability of its reaching you once obtain possession of your mind, and you become cautious and careful to avoid it;—watchful at every movement, lest the dreaded mischance overtake yourself or the interests that are dear to you. And in all this, you act the part of reasonable rational beings. But let us change the subject to God, and things spiritual and divine: There is surely much told you in the word of God concerning them; not one iota of all which, to say the least, you can prove to be false, and every one iota of which, to say also the least, there is the strongest probability of being faithful and true. The character and attributes, the will, and the government of God, are clearly evidenced unto you. And yet is there industry, or labour, or diligence of mind, on your part, to become acquainted with God? Alas! with respect to many, we fear that there is not; we speak to your own conscience, and can you deny the charge? Then surely I am entitled to say, that you care not for God,—that you are actually ignorant of Him; and whatever other acquirements or talents your mind may possess, it is destitute of true faith in God.

It is thus that every mind, in its natural state, is positively astray from God; separated from Him, not having God, practically or habitually, as an object of thought at all. This is what the word

of God declares to be spiritual death, alienation, blindness, foolishness, and sin.

Now, we return to the position we set out with, that faith, rightly so called, is the gift of God, not originating or springing up naturally in the mind, but bestowed upon it, by a gracious exercise of power on the part of an Almighty Creator; and bearing in memory the description which we have attempted, of the natural mind in its workings, well may we hold the grace or principle of faith, to be in every respect equivalent to a new sense, or faculty, or power, bestowed upon the mind. As such, it is uniformly represented in the word of God, and not only as a new sense or power, but one that grows up and increases, until it becomes predominant there, even the master sense or capacity, making all the other powers of mind subservient to its own use, as when it is said, that it purifies the heart, that it works by love, and that it is the victory, or the strength, which overcometh the world. And surely admitting at all the existence of God, that He is the Creator and Governor over His own creatures, and that His creatures we are,—surely there is nothing improbable, there is nothing irrational, there is nothing contradictory or opposed to reason, in thinking, that God the Creator and Father of our spirits within us, could bestow upon those spirits of ours a new or additional sense and capacity; and equally

consistent with true reason is it, that He should, by this procedure of His, and by the instrumentality of this single principle, transform our minds, so as to bear a very different impress and character from that which they naturally bear. We say it is not contrary to reason; nor is it; but it is above what reason could itself discover; and just here lies the difficulty, and here is the stumbling-stone and rock of offence to the natural mind. It will not admit the reality of what is beyond its own unaided exercise; and why? It is because of the very feature and fact which we have been at pains to detect and expose to you, and to prove, as reigning actually in you; that your mind is shut against contemplation and thoughts of God, and what He is in Himself. The very reason for which, you see not, and will not readily admit, the necessity of faith, being, what we now represent it to be, just that you *have not* faith in God. Call it by what name you will, that signifies nothing; but ere you can be brought into true knowledge of God, and habitual intercourse and communion with Him in your mind, you must obtain this new sense or faculty in your mind. But when we say it is the gift of God, and a new faculty, we do not maintain, that in its bestowal, or production in the mind itself, there is any process sensibly miraculous to the individual, or that it is a sensibly instantaneous process. It is not. On

the contrary, God humbles Himself, condescends to deal with us as rational and finite beings, and for His own wise and glorious ends, so governs His own gracious work, that its process, with regard to the feelings and perceptions of the mind in which true faith is wrought, is gradual, and often seemingly slow. And this Christ alludes to, when he says,—"The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Yet we would, and do maintain, that when the bestowal of this new faculty of soul, this grace or principle of faith from God is granted to the individual, he must be sensible of its being something new, and opposed to his former habits of mind. This at least must be said of all cases, wherein individuals are not sanctified to God, from their earliest days; and that such cases exist we doubt not; but where they do, the minds of such persons are very different indeed, from being in that state, which, we have been endeavouring to show, is peculiar to every individual in their natural estate.

Now, we have to remark, that the very beginning of the operation of true faith, when bestowed upon the mind, is, to supply that sad deficiency in

the mental character, which we have so frequently alluded to; it turns the mind to be occupied with thoughts concerning God. The fancied belief in the abstract proposition, that He is, or exists, can no longer satisfy the mind in which faith is implanted, even while it is yet as a grain of mustard-seed there. The mind is awakened by this new sense, to seek knowledge of God, and of His character and will; or rather there is now a faculty in it which has its own operation of inquiring and seeking for knowledge of God; just in the same manner, as corporeally, the man who was born blind, whenever he had his sense of sight bestowed upon him, must have been busily employed in seeking for knowledge of those objects which were formerly altogether unknown to him in their visible properties. And may you not well perceive, how it would be with him, that the receiving of his sight, having this sense, new indeed *to him*, bestowed, would make in a measure subservient now to his sense of sight, the other faculties and powers of his mind. But, another property of the principle of faith, is, that it reveals to the mind, in some measure, the objects concerning which the mind is now awakened. The individual now has some certain measure of knowledge regarding God, in His character and government, and will; and these become to him objects of anxious and frequent, if not of *habitual*

thought and reflection. And through this new exercise of mind, the very first consequence is, that the individual thus renewed, now begins to have altered views regarding his own character of heart, and mind, and conduct, with reference to God, whom he now in some measure knows, and truly believes in. From his mind, the thoughts and perceptions of God which are come to it, cannot be habitually away. The new faculty received, brings him habitually back to those serious and solemn considerations. We must be brief in our details of description, only as if marking the outlines; but we would remark, that the next step to this, is, generally, if not universally, a deep and conscious feeling of guilt in the sight of God, and a prevalent sense of fear and anxiety respecting His anger and wrath against sin. Formerly, sin was just heard of, and scarcely any thing more, while God was not thought of, or His character or will recognised; but now, in the light of this new faculty, beginning to be influential in the mind, it is clearly seen, that every sin is an act of rebellion against God, and of guiltiness in His holy sight. The soul now dreads the vengeance of God, and is in fear lest that vengeance speedily overtake it. And were the exercise of the newly given faculty to stop here, instead of faith being a shield to the soul, it would be the means of laying it open to the most fearful and unmitigated

anguish. But the exercise of faith is, to search onwards into the knowledge and character of God; and it also lays hold now most willingly and anxiously, on the testimony which the word of God affords to it; and in the glorious Gospel of Christ it discovers, that if God be holy, and just, and true, to punish sin, He is also abundantly gracious to forgive it; and that in His own counsels of infinite wisdom He has ordained, and His eternal love has perfected, a way, in which God can still be just, when He justifies the ungodly sinner, forgiving his sins and transgressions, and restoring him into His own favour, accepting him even as righteous, in Jesus Christ, for the sake of what *He* has done and suffered, as the surety and mediator of sinners, in His own person and offices. Now, observe, it is the principle of faith, which causes the mind to look to all this, and to feel, and consider it precious. Without faith it is all but mere matter of hearsay; but by the exercise of faith as a living principle, the soul now feels deeply interested in what it formerly allowed to pass away altogether, practically unheeded and uncared for.

It will then be asked, if all they who have serious and solemn thoughts and impressions of this sort, have true faith in God, and are they endowed with a new faculty or power of mind? And assuredly all who are impressed in the man-

ner now represented, have an appearance of faith in God; but we would esteem the criterion of its truth and reality to be, when it governs the mind habitually, and when it places the character of God, as a God in Christ, so distinctly, and impressively, and clearly before the mind, that the individual now has trust and confidence in the mercy and grace of God, for eternal salvation; and this substantially and explicitly founded on the revealed will of God, and the finished work and intercession of a crucified and exalted Saviour; and this too accompanied, by such an habitual and experienced view of the character of God, and the true spiritual interests of the soul, as makes the soul to hate sin, and to strive and long for deliverance from its ruling power. Together with this, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and a sad deficiency of it felt, and lamented; the contemplation of God, as He is manifested in Christ Jesus, is now a theme on which the mind delights to dwell, and which, the more it is dwelt upon, increases the confidence of the soul in Him, as the God of its salvation, and its exceeding great reward.

In this renewed and enlightened state of mind, spiritual and eternal things become indeed realities, as they are in themselves, to the true and sincere believer. He now feels that his highest interests are in heaven, and that this world is not his home or his portion, and that his business and

privilege here are to serve and glorify God. Now, all this exercise of mind is found to have its influence in subduing the evils inherent in our depraved and fallen nature. "Whosoever hath this hope in Him, purifies himself, even as God is pure." And the reality of faith is farther proved, by those who receive it being exercised habitually in seeking conformity to the will of God, in all the workings of the inner man, and in all their outward goings and conduct. In this course, indeed, they meet with much opposition, and with sore tribulations of soul. Their hearts are by nature opposed to the will of God, and their affections and imaginations and thoughts are earthly, and evil, and rebellious. By the enlightening power of faith, this is seen and experienced; and this is the spiritual warfare in which they are engaged. Sin within, in all its real workings, the power of a present vain and evil world, its cares and trials, its allurements and pleasures, according as believers happen, in the overruling providence of God, to be individually placed; and the temptations and evil suggestions of those spiritual principalities and powers which seek their ruin, and of which the context bears testimony. But in all this warfare, faith is indeed the shield of the soul. Just as the shield to the warrior was used to ward off the weapons of the foe, and to guard the body from the attacks that were aimed at it, just as the

warrior wielded it to meet in each direction the enemy's arrow or sword, so does faith, by its exercise in the soul, suppress and extinguish the sinful thought, making the perception and recognition of God alive and active there; so does it frown rebuke upon the unhallowed passion, the ungodly desire, the evil wish, the sinful word, and the disobedient, unholy deed. Let faith but have its due exercise; in other words, let God be contemplated, and sin is curbed and restrained, and thus the soul by degrees set free from its power. Sin wounds the soul; and the renewed and enlightened soul, sin pierces through with anguish and sorrow; but with faith in exercise, sin reigns not, and the soul is preserved in spiritual health and safety. The temptations of Satan present sin in its most alluring colours, and the pleasures of sin in their most fascinating garb; but faith in exercise is more powerful than these, and it shews the nature and evil of sin, it unmasks its hatefulness, and maintains upon the spirit of man the impressive knowledge and view of the holiness and purity of God, and His hatred of sin, as manifested especially in the person and cross of Christ; and thus does it become the shield indeed of the soul, preserving it from the commission of sin. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" is the language of faith; and well truly might an inspired apostle exclaim, that we are sur-

rounded with a cloud of witnesses, when we look to the record of Scripture, and see there set before us the illustrious triumphs of faith. But let us remember, that it is yet farther a shield indeed to the soul, when its exercise is beholding the free and sovereign and abundant grace of God in Jesus Christ; when it looks unto Him as its own author and finisher, who now lives and rules exalted in heaven, and has every authority in His hands, and can seek unto Him, for strength and vigour, and action, at the very seasons when sin and Satan threaten to overwhelm and subdue it. Faith is then the shield of the soul, because it ministers not only strength but courage and confidence in the Lord; when it teaches the soul to know that whatever evil threatens it, stronger is God than all, and this God on its side in the contest and trial. "*If* God be for us," says Faith, "who can be against us?" and thus too, amid the evils and trials and hardships of life, does the faculty of faith teach the soul to know and feel that God reigns over all, even *its* God and protector and friend, and that all His promises are faithful and true, and must be finally fulfilled; and that however the wisdom of God may judge it good to exercise the soul in trials and sorrows, still He cannot deny Himself, but will assuredly make all things to work together for good to the believer. This knowledge of God, then, as a God in Christ,

which faith gives to the mind, is the means of its safety and strength and security here; and by its efficacy and strength, the soul lays hold of everlasting life; yea, the believing soul lays hold of God and of heaven, as its sure and eternal portion, so that in life and death, it is indeed the shield of the soul. The soldier's shield might indeed be tried with the darts and sword of the enemy, it might be penetrated and fail; but though the believer's faith may be tried, as assuredly it shall every day of his life, and though it may be sorely beset, and seem to be overcome, yet finally fail it cannot; its efficacy is suspended on the constant intercession of Christ in heaven, who will strengthen and renew its vigour, in each time of the believer's need. The enemy may seem to prevail, but God will renew the shield, and give the believer the victory.

On the second head of discourse we enter not now. From what has been advanced, would to God that each one of you solemnly considered your state, whether you yet have faith in Him, and through faith, knowledge of Him, and confidence in Christ as your only Saviour; and if your hearts condemn you, assuring you that you have not, God is *now* able and willing, and He freely offers, by His gracious Spirit to bestow it upon you. Seek earnestly unto Him, while yet the offer is made, and He will pour forth His

Spirit upon you, and by faith make Himself manifest to your soul, and enable you to know and experience that a life of faith is life and happiness indeed, while a life of unbelief and alienation from God is but dreariness and misery and death to the soul.

And let believers remember that their faith must be continually, as if repaired, and renewed, and strengthened; fitted on as their shield for the combat. Do you bewail the ascendancy of sin in your mind? seek for faith in God. Place the request foremost in your supplications to God. Rest not satisfied when clear and distinct views of His character as a God in Christ do not rule predominantly with you. Despair not because of its weakness now; wait you upon God, and He will abundantly increase and renew it, until you become habitually conversant with His free and sovereign grace in Christ, as your eternal treasury and store-house of faith. Seek it from Him, and your soul shall be kept in perfect peace, amid all the trials of your present spiritual warfare, till you obtain the victory, and lay down your shield in heaven, at the foot of His throne, and eternally sing His praise.

SERMON VII.

EPHESIANS vi. 16.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

IN addressing you on a former occasion from these words, we intimated the natural division of the subject into two parts; first, an explanation of the figure under which faith is here spoken of, how it becomes to the soul of the believer, what the shield, as a weapon of warfare, was corporeally to the soldier; and, secondly, the uses of this shield in course of the Christian warfare. The former of these two we endeavoured to illustrate. We now proceed, in dependance on divine aid, to inquire into the uses for which this shield is supplied to the believer in the economy of grace, and in which it must be habitually exercised. Here we enter upon a subject which is extensive and vast. The uses of this spiritual shield are just as numerous as the circumstances, and trials, and dangers are to which each believer on Christ may be exposed. Volumes might be written upon

it, and profitably perused. All we can expect or attempt to do is, to bring before you some particular uses of it, which must be common to *every* believer, and without which being felt and experienced, you deceive yourselves, if you judge that you are living a life of faith upon the Son of God. With regard to the shield itself, of faith, we must here so far recur to what was formerly advanced, as to remind you of its being in actual amount as a new power or faculty bestowed upon the mind, —implanted there, and in its very nature a powerful and commanding faculty. Its operation is to reveal spiritual objects to the soul: and these, when once seen, understood, and contemplated in their importance and nature, cannot but be precious and desirable in the enlightened mind's view. Now, according as faith is established in the soul, those objects will be habitually present to it, and the mind will become set upon obtaining an interest and possession in them. It is on this ground that the essential, uncompromised difference of feeling, and sentiment, and habits, lies between believers and unbelievers; those who are endowed with the principle of faith, and those who are not. The latter look not beyond the objects of this life in any practical manner; and they can neither understand nor approve the earnestness and anxiety regarding spiritual objects which any believer must be seen exhibiting. The

believer, on the other hand, feels how lamentable it is that he is himself not *more* occupied about spiritual and eternal objects,—he feels that his soul cleaves to the dust, and this makes him often sorrowful and sad. The unbeliever, who has no sympathy with all this, because he sees not the objects, complains and protests against religion that it makes people sad and gloomy. But the believer feels, and has the witness within himself, that it is *not* religion which makes him gloomy or sad, but the want of religion,—how far short he actually comes in its principles and in its practice. And this you will see manifested among Christians, if indeed you observe or study their conduct and bearing;—if the foundations of piety in the soul be implanted thoroughly,—if convictions be deep, and the soul humbled early before God, which it will be just according to the measure of faith bestowed,—that as the Christian advances in a life of godliness, he became staid, composed, and cheerful in all his habits and duties. We do not say that in his advanced stages of spiritual life and progress, his conflicts or trials are over; or that his zeal dies away: it is far otherwise; but as it happens in temporal warfare, he acquires experience and collectedness of mind: he can face struggles and contests and conflicts of soul without wavering, which terrify and alarm the more inexperienced in Christian warfare; and as a good

soldier of Christ, he is in a spiritual sense, to offer a familiar illustration, just like the veteran soldier in earthly warfare who has seen much service, and who stands unscared by enemies, and unappalled before the thickening and threatening onsets of the foe. His shield, and all his weapons of warfare, are good; and he has through grace, under the leadership of Christ his spiritual head, the great Captain of his salvation, acquired experience and dexterity in using them. Thus, the experienced apostle, who records also the words of our text, says elsewhere, when speaking of the wicked one, in contest with whom the shield of faith is employed, "We are not ignorant of his devices." And if you, my younger friends, would wish to prosper in the spiritual life, and to withstand in the days of trial, which must yet assuredly come to you, seek now for increase of Faith above all things; seek to have clear, settled, established views in your soul, of the character of that God whom you are called to serve,—of the glorious Redeemer, who has purchased your souls with His blood, and who ever lives making intercession for you; and you will thus come to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. It is in the believing view of Him, and fighting under His glorious banner of love, that you will attain to true spiritual fortitude and courage, and your enemies, you will learn to your comfort, can

never withstand you, and far less can they conquer you.

But, proceeding to inquire into the practical uses of the shield of faith, they are classified in our text under one general and extensive head, —"the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." There is in these words, still a continuation of, and a strict adherence to the figure of speech which runs throughout our context at large. The trials incident to the spiritual life, and the dangers to which it is continually exposed, are compared to the scenes and realities of a temporal warfare, the one being in themselves just as real as the other. Most of you will, no doubt, be aware that in ancient times a great part of actual warfare in battles and sieges was carried on by the use of missile weapons. Darts or arrows indeed, were weapons much more deadly and fatal than we now are apt to imagine; for in the constant use and exercise of them, warriors of old became so skilled and expert as to make them formidable, and efficacious, and sure. And most commentators on this passage, if you consult them, you will find speaking much of darts of two special kinds. One kind was used, having their points imbued with deadly poison,—a practice we know still to be common among barbarous nations. Those darts, as many commentators seem to sup-

pose, fired the blood, and produced madness or delirium. We are not formally going to controvert or dispute this opinion; though we believe there is no sufficient authority, for such an effect being produced by them. Another kind of darts were those, the use of which is attested on very sufficient authority, which containing, or rather having attached to them, certain inflammable matter, were thrown or flung with such amazing velocity, as to kindle this inflammable substance, rendering the dart literally a fiery one. Now we apprehend, that this latter is the kind to which the words of our text refer, in the comparison it makes. And to render that comparison more intelligible, we must state, that such fiery darts are known to have been used principally, if not wholly, in one species of warfare—we mean that of sieges. The besieged and besiegers both are known to have used them; and the service of which they might be in such cases, to both parties, in effecting their end in view, may be at once understood by you, without our dwelling on any specialties of description. In the continuance and progress of sieges, facilities would be presented for the preparation and use of such weapons. And we are so particular in mentioning this, because we apprehend that the inspired apostle had this species of warfare particularly in view. That the contests, and hardships, and

trials of the spiritual warfare resemble it most, or at least in very many particulars, we deem to be strongly apparent, when we consider its nature. The heart or soul of man, or, in other words, the human mind, with all its capacities and powers, is often compared to a stronghold,—to a city or town. Within it there lie many different and diversified parts, and its powers, viewed collectively, may well be compared to a citadel. This is by sin defiled and polluted; or, in accordance with the figure in our text and context, we should rather say, that the citadel of the soul is by nature in possession of rebels against God. All the powers and capacities of the human mind, individually, and in the aggregate amount, have become the servants and slaves of sin and Satan, disobedient to God. But in the day of conversion, matters come to bear a different aspect in this stronghold of iniquity, the human soul. It is taken possession of by the Lord of glory, unto Himself; the citadel of the heart is won, and the banner of its heavenly King is raised upon its walls. And thus we find it recorded in prophecy concerning Christ and His kingdom in the soul; Psalm cx. 3. "Thy people," that is, the people of Christ, "shall be willing in the day of thy power," which all agree would have been more literally rendered into our language, by calling it "the day of thine armies;" that day,

or time, or season of conversion to God, when His armies, His Spirit, with His word, His providential dealings, and the means and instruments employed in the over-ruling sovereignty of Heaven, subdue the soul into the desire of filial obedience to God. And it is in this state that the soul will be attacked by its spiritual enemies. Formerly they had quiet possession of it, and needed not to besiege it; formerly it was in possession of the strong man, but a stronger, in conversion, has come, and assumed the authority to Himself; and then is the soul surrounded and beset by its spiritual enemies, seeking to recover their former possession—to destroy the work of grace, and again to subdue the soul to become anew the servant of Satan and sin. And surely the most dangerous state is that in which, under such circumstances, there are enemies both without and within; those within, willing and waiting to betray, and those without seeking to overcome, to enter, and to subdue it. Of all species or kinds of warfare, this is the most dangerous and trying, in a worldly sense, and it is so in the spiritual. Ask experienced soldiers of this world's warfare, and they will tell you, that of all, there is no warfare so trying as that of a siege. They could stand the day of battle, and be excited, and full of courage, and vigour, and strength, in its thickest and hottest assaults; they could face the

enemy, and turn his best contrived attacks into disorder and flight; they could even shout for joy in the very midst of the battle's deadly affray, when they saw their enemies flying, or vanquished, or slain! But in the protracted, dreary, exhausting business of the siege, it is otherwise far. Day by day, and night by night, and hour by hour, only renews their bodily and their mental toil. They know there are enemies on every side, and dangers in every quarter, and yet they know not well in what quarter the danger may soon be the greatest. Their persons are worn down with constant toil, their mind subdued by protracted watchings and care; their spirits are prone to sink, and their hands to become feeble; and privations and hardships assail them within, as well as enemies from without; while still each moment they must be on the watch, not knowing but the next moment may bring to them the concentrated fury of the foe. And together with all this, there is a greater hardship still. While defending their walls, they cannot so much as raise the head, or expose the person, without becoming a mark to the enemy, and, in the words of Scripture itself, are in jeopardy every hour. And in this situation, too, the fiery darts of the enemy, or similar weapons, may light amongst them, and add the terror of the devouring element, fire, to their other accumulated hardships

and toils. The very means of their defence and covering, may thus in a moment be turned into means of their bodily destruction. Against all these things they have continually to guard. Dangerous as it may be, they must be on their watch-tower, and exposing their persons to the prospect of instant death from the weapons of enemies whom they can attack in return scarcely with any advantage. We must add, that in ancient warfare of this kind, the soldier must stand with his shield, ready to quench with it, the fiery darts of the enemy. He raised the shield that the dart might fall upon it, and not enter into the places within, lest devouring fire should be kindled. Now it is thus that the believer is situated, in a spiritual sense. His enemies are numerous and active, insidious and crafty, and determined upon his ruin, so far as lies in them. The powers of darkness are described to us in the Scripture, numerous, and strong, and artful; as most clearly announced to us in the words of our context, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." These, my friends, are not enemies to be seen by the natural eye, or to be resisted by natural courage. For the truth is, that according to the *natural* working of the mind, we will but esteem them as friends,

and seek to open to them the gates of the heart's citadel, and admit them, to our ruin. It is not, therefore, our natural strength of mind, whatever that may be, which can be the means of our defence. It is the principle of faith, that principle implanted in the soul by the Spirit of God in conversion, which alone can defend and protect us. And how does it accomplish this? Faith, by its power of revelation, enlightening the mind in the knowledge of God and of His glorious character, perfections, and will, establishing this light and knowledge in the understanding and conscience, affording there, the true and accurate knowledge of sin. This produces views and feelings regarding sin, which are peculiar and strong. It makes the soul of quick discernment, to perceive the nature and tendency of sin in its workings. The nature of temptation is to present sin to the mind, in its most alluring and fascinating aspect,—it holds up its pleasures, its profits, its gain, its exaltations, and its advantages. But when faith is in exercise, when put on as the shield of the soul, the views and feelings regarding God, and regarding sin, which it gives, will repress and subdue the risings and the workings of sin, so that they come not to maturity, either of thought, or purpose, or action. Sin, indeed, and temptation, will enter the believer's thoughts; but when he has faith in exercise, that faith will subdue the

thoughts of evil, and put them to flight. This is the quenching of the fiery darts of the wicked. The powers of wickedness, those rulers of the darkness of this world, will continue thus to assail the believer. Even with regard to God Himself, there will be evil and blasphemous thoughts excited, which, if admitted into the soul, to find exercise there, and to mature themselves into purposes, and actions or deeds, where would the wretched soul be, or what would be its state, but set on fire of hell, to contend with God, and to blaspheme His holy name, and to perish for ever? But such imaginations and thoughts,—the fiery darts of the wicked,—are quenched by the believer, with the shield of faith on, and spiritually wielded. The very fabric of this shield is the light and the knowledge of the glory of God. The instigations of Satan, foul and deadly as the quarter from which they come, when met by this light and knowledge of God in the soul, will be quenched. We would represent in figure, according to the spirit of our text, the desires and purposes of the converted soul, as the walls of the spiritual citadel. If the enemy can undermine them or break them down, he comes in like a flood, and the soul is in danger of everlasting destruction; but the views and thoughts, the knowledge and understanding given by faith, are as the defenders upon this wall in the soul, and

they recur in time of trial to their first principle, faith, from which they emanate. They do as it were lay hold of faith as their shield, and on that, the fiery darts of the wicked are received, and quenched, and made harmless. They enter not into the powers and capacities of the soul—they enter not thus as it were into the houses and streets of the citadel, nor set them on fire, nor slay the watchmen or warriors on the wall. Thus, the purposes and desires of the believing soul, in which the believer seeks to serve and glorify God, are kept alive, maintained, and confirmed. But farther, the fiery darts of the wicked are thrown, and aimed against the soul, and its eternal interests, in the shape of doubting, unbelieving, and even despairing thoughts. The believer feels himself a guilty, depraved, polluted, and disobedient sinner, and so assuredly he is, in himself. The evil powers of darkness will continually seek to suggest to him, that he cannot possibly obtain mercy or grace—that he has already sinned too long and too heinously, to be now accepted of God; and as if in very mockery and scorn, it will be suggested to the soul, how ridiculous, even how absurd it is, that such an individual should hope to be included in the number of God's children. These suggestions come with such frequency and such quickness into the thoughts, and they take hold of the mind so sud-

denly and so imperceptibly even to itself at the time, that they are but little heeded; but they are the fiery darts of the wicked which in this manner deeply wound the soul. And it is when by their very frequency and habit, being once admitted, they form an accumulated bigness, that they come to be felt repelling the mind from the exercise of all trust and filial confidence upon the free and sovereign mercy of God in Christ. Here the shield of faith was awanting, or had not been used;—the whole person, in a spiritual sense, was left undefended, and the enemy prevailed, and the keepers of the soul's citadel, thus being wounded and weakened, the enemy draws near, and undermines the walls, that is, the purposes and spiritual desires of the mind. The glory of God, as He is manifested gracious and merciful in Christ Jesus, and freely offering all things good to the soul,—this is obscured and hidden from it, and it is almost wholly laid prostrate to the power of the enemy, even the wicked one. And until again the shield of faith be raised, and applied to its use, this state will continue, and the soul can have neither light, nor consolation, nor comfort. But even in this state, there is a remedy, and it is, to come for faith to Christ,—in Him all fulness dwells,—the everlasting store-house is with Him of all spiritual armour; and though you recognise Him not now; and though His mercy, and

grace, and truth are concealed from your view, still call His name to remembrance—take counsel from His own infallible word, where His glorious character is set before you; cry unto Him as from the depths, and He will assuredly hear and answer your cry; and the shield of faith which you had lost, or cast away, or neglected, He will present unto you renewed, and you will be yet again enabled to withstand the enemy, repelling his grievous assaults. Until faith is, as it were, renewed, indeed not only renewed, but as far as regards your experience, given anew, as if you never had had it before, your soul cannot sustain the conflict with the enemy, nor can the purposes or desires of your soul be sincere or faithful, to serve the Lord in newness of life. There is indeed naturally in the heart of men within, independently of the fiery darts of the wicked from without, a stronghold or power of unbelief, of which, ignorance of God is the very foundation. And while faith is the shield of the soul, to protect it from the enemy's fiery darts, so it is also the light, the sun, which dispels this darkness of unbelief from the mind, or rather we should say, that the Lord Jesus Himself is that light of the spiritual world—that sun of righteousness, but its light is reflected into the soul by the grace of faith, and overcomes the power of this evil unbelief. And thus, when

faith is found wanting in the soul, it is alone the hand of God, the Spirit carrying unto it through the new and living way of the merits of Christ, the gift, the shield of faith, who can enable the soul to have, and to use it. The soldier would be foolish and vain indeed, who would go forth to his watching and fighting place in the siege, to expose himself to the darts of the foe, without his necessary defence. He would be foolish to trust to the strength of his person, which the darts of the enemy would so soon penetrate, when his shield was a-wanting; and it is the folly and loss of the Christian, when he goes forth to spiritual warfare, unmindful of carrying with him the shield of faith; and remember, my friends, of this *you* are guilty, when you forget, that it is by renewed visitations of the Spirit of God working effectually in you, that alone you can have this shield to protect or defend you. You cannot raise or use it, but by His heavenly aid; and O, how gracious, and full, and complete are the provisions of the everlasting covenant, and the unspeakable love and condescension of God manifested in it, when His Spirit delights to dwell with the sinful children of men, girding on them their armour, and instructing their hands to war, and renewing their weapons of warfare unto them continually according to their need,—that, finally, they may be made conquerors.

But besides the power of unbelief in the soul, though indeed it be the very source of all other sins, there are, through its power in the human heart, evil and guilty passions, feelings and desires. These can soon be kindled into flame, by the fiery darts of the wicked,—those temptations of Satan which beset the mind at every moment and in every quarter. It is to defend the soul from the darts of the wicked reaching unto these, that the shield of faith is specially required. This faith or shield, as we have so often repeated, and would seek to impress upon you, is a true belief in God, and a filial confidence in Him. This must be continually kept in exercise, for temptations or darts continually assail you. And when these evil passions, or any one of them, is inflamed in the mind, from whatever provocation or cause, be assured that an enemy hath done it; and that had you faith in exercise, the passion or evil affection would not have come into exercise. And your course is, as you value your soul's salvation, and the glory of God, when you feel their first risings, proclaiming to you that the enemy now assails you, instantly to hasten and put on your shield;—betake yourself to God in prayer, and seek from Him through Christ, faith renewedly; for be assured that when the enemy sees his dart taking effect, he will not fail to follow up the attack with others, thickly and swiftly, until your soul

be, as we mentioned before, set on fire of hell, and the Spirit of God be grieved, and depart from you, and leave you the prey of the enemy. And what situation or circumstance can the believer be found in, that he may not have freedom of access to God in prayer? Let the thought, the look of supplication for strength and protection against this evil predominant at the time, whatever it may be,—let this be directed to God, and He is ever at hand to hear and to answer it,—the aspiration of soul, unheard and unknown of men on earth, can reach to the throne of God in the heavens, and there be regarded and answered; and you shall have good cause to say from time to time with the Psalmist, "Now know I that the Lord saveth His anointed: He will hear him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." And on this part of our subject, my friends, O, how loudly are you called upon to remember, that the wicked one with his fiery darts, fighteth against you, having all the beggarly elements of this world as his very auxiliaries, to supply his darts to him, in all his assaults against you. The interests of earth, its cares, its gains, its vexations and losses, of these the enemy makes his fiery darts to assault your souls, for he is the prince of this world, and by him it lies under the curse. And when-

ever you look to it exclusively, and your evil passions are inflamed by it; *then*, there has come to you the dart of the wicked, wounding your soul. Faith looks above and beyond it, and let that faith be your shield. The eyes of the understanding must not only be opened in the conversion of the soul, but you must renewedly anoint your eyes, in a spiritual sense, with eye-salve, that you may see,—that the spiritual world, the kingdom of glory to which you are called, may be present before you; and then surely this world's objects would not obtain dominion over you.

But as the world itself is the auxiliary of the wicked one in besetting the believer's soul, so are the people of this world also, who are taken captive of him at his will. They will vex and harass the godly, and in some shape must *all* who live a life of faith on the Son of God, endure persecution from them. Even in the nearest relations of life, the believer will meet with it; in the quarters where the citadel of the heart is most open to the attacks of this insidious and crafty foe, with all his emissaries of evil. And you have need of faith as your shield, to protect you there, to look to the relation in which you stand to God above all other relations, or in which you seek or hope to stand with Him in Christ Jesus, as the purchase of His blood; and in which you seek to become the heir of His everlasting glory. O, let faith, then, be sought by

you as your shield, that you may have continually before you, the wonders of redeeming love, the eternal debt which you owe to it, the glorious prospects which it sets before you, the elevating, and at the same time the humbling hope with which it inspires the soul. You owe your all to Christ, devote your all to *Him*. And in the light and revelation of faith, strive to have continually impressed upon your spirit within you, the view of Christ crucified, suffering in His body and soul for sin, even yours; and will not this awaken your soul unto righteousness, to flee from sin in your habits? yea, this view will be indeed as the shield of your soul, quenching the fiery darts of the wicked; and assailed though you be, you will have strength ministered unto you, sent from above; and the besieged place, even your soul, shall be set free from the enemy's power; the contest may be protracted, perhaps, but its end will be glorious. As the shield of faith becomes exercised by you the more, your soul will be sanctified the more to God. O cease not, then, to seek this shield from God; and while time forbids us now to enter into the specialties farther of this faith in its exercise, we entreat you not to rest satisfied, until you be able to declare in the experience of your soul, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust."

SERMON VIII.

EPHES. vi. 16.

Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

IN last addressing you from these words, our endeavour was to explain and enforce the solemn and arduous duty here spoken of, and how it is realized in the believer's actual history and experience. We have endeavoured from the words to set before you the nature of faith, as a special grace in the soul, implanted there by the Spirit of God; and in its very nature necessarily becoming a grace of ruling and presiding influence. We also endeavoured, in following the figure employed by the apostle, to point out to you some of the practical uses to which the shield of faith is applied. These are stated, indeed, in the words of our text, but yet, generally, under one common head, to "quench

all the fiery darts of the wicked." In these words there is very obviously implied, that the darts of the wicked are numerous, and of many kinds. We endeavoured to show, that there is specially signified by these fiery darts, the risings and instigations of sin in the soul, and that nothing can prevent the soul being overcome and conquered by these, and made the slave of sin, to its own eternal ruin, but the shield of faith, and its being exercised and wielded with spiritual skill, and watchfulness, and patience, and strength. Faith is the gift of God; and equally with faith, the skill, the watchfulness, the patience, and the strength necessary to wield it. But it is through the instrumentality of faith that these other graces come to the soul, and are exercised there. Faith has a twofold influence in the spiritual experience of the believer. It is the means by which he becomes partaker of the graces mentioned now, as specially necessary to the prosecution of the spiritual warfare; these graces, when received, act again with faith, and help to keep it in exercise; and thus it becomes truly in practice the shield of the soul. It has a place of superiority in the soul, to which we endeavoured to show that the apostle specially alludes, when he says, "*Above all*, taking the shield of faith." In endeavouring to bring before you the nature of faith, we stated its being similar and equal in a spiritual sense, to

what a new faculty would be, in the bodily or mental constitution of a human being, with regard to temporal objects. It is, in actual amount, a new sense or faculty bestowed upon the mind, and it dwells and operates as such, in every mind which truly receives it. And we would advert now, by way of illustration, to a well-known fact in the constitution of man, that a new faculty bestowed, of which the individual was formerly destitute, to the uses and exercise of which he was formerly a stranger, opens up to that individual a wide, we may indeed call it, a boundless field for new experience, new sensations and feelings, which he could not previously have any knowledge of, because destitute of the faculty which now produces them. So does the grace of faith in the soul with respect to spiritual objects. The mind was before actually an alien to them. But now, it becomes conversant with them. It is not on the objects themselves that any change takes place—it is on the mind which now begins to perceive them, and which is exercised in contemplating them. The man who was born blind, whenever he received his sight—a faculty which was new to him—saw men as trees walking; but it was not in the appearance of those men that any change had taken place, it was in his faculties who now began to behold them. According to the unvaried and infallible declarations of Scrip-

ture, it is clearly set before us, that the grace, or we may call it with equal propriety the faculty, of faith in the soul when bestowed upon it, has in its very nature a principle of growth or increase, carrying it forward towards maturity and perfection of use. We are not indeed to view this quality in the grace of faith, independently or separately from God its author. The cause and source of this property in faith is, the everlasting love and faithfulness of the Lord, who assures us in His word, "that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The word of God abounds throughout with the same gracious encouragements to every anxious and inquiring mind. It is even given us as a characteristic feature of the work and reign of Christ in the souls of His people,—"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." But while the grace of faith has thus its own progressive or growing quality, what we have particularly to observe, is, that at each successive stage and degree of its progress, it is the shield of the soul, defending the soul from the fiery darts of the wicked, according to its need. We endeavoured formerly to set before you, that faith in its very incipient workings, brought spiritual objects into the soul's view; and of all objects thus revealed

by it, that, God Himself, with His character, attributes, and government, formed the principal and the grand one. Whenever the soul is even thus far enlightened, there is a consciousness of sin and guilt awakened; and if any thing now be reproved as sin in the individual's experience, it is, that fearful and habitual departure from the living God, from all practical consideration of Him, and of spiritual objects, to which the mind, wholly polluted by sin, is naturally inclined. In such circumstances the individual must feel readily, the truth and reality of the apostle's experience, when he says, "sin revived." The fiery darts of the wicked which now assail the mind, are the instigations, the allurements, the enticements of sin, presented unto it, undoubtedly by the power of Satan, but through the instrumentality of the world, its objects, its relations, its pleasures, its profits, its honours, and its comforts. The mind will feel itself more powerfully than ever before, attracted towards all these, to the neglecting and denying of those spiritual objects and considerations, which faith has brought before it. The strength of innate, original corruption in the soul, pervading all its powers, will, in such circumstances, side with the allurements presented, and if yielding to these, the soul commences a course of rebellion against God and the counsels of His Spirit, which will deeply and

fearfully aggravate its guilt, and increase its danger. But the grace of faith, by its very nature, is calculated to oppose the working of sin and Satan. And in such circumstances we would apprise and warn the believing soul, or let us say, the awakened, anxious, and inquiring mind, that it must not look forward to the obtaining of *final* victory, by the strength of faith, or the extent of spiritual view, already acquired. This indeed is to be exercised, and diligently exercised; but the special use of faith is to reveal its gracious Author: you behold not yet His glory with sufficient clearness; your views of His abounding grace and love are not yet sufficiently formed; your views of eternal, spiritual objects, in their excellence and value, are not yet sufficiently established. Seek and endeavour, therefore, that they may be so, and for that end come unto God,—cast your souls upon Him, as a God in Christ not only able, but abundantly willing to minister unto you light and strength. You will ask, How can I come without faith? for you feel as if you had none,—and how will you come without increase of faith? But we seek you to come, *for* increase of faith: surely you can confess before God your unbelief—your spiritual ignorance and darkness; and cannot you look to, and behold His infallible record of truth, which He gives to you, and in which His character is set before you? If you be indeed made

anxious regarding spiritual objects, then, O do not accuse or charge God foolishly, as if He were not gracious to you; but come unto Him for more grace, with the prayer of the endangered disciples,—"Save us Lord, lest we perish." You are called to the exercise of grace received, however small, yea of however doubtful appearance it may seem to you; and by this exercise of faith, however weak or imperfect its beginnings, it will prove to you the shield of the soul, quenching the fiery darts of the wicked; and it will draw you near to Him who is its author; and from out of His everlasting fulness you will receive according to His own promise, "more grace;" and your faith itself will be strengthened, its growth increased, and its operation enlarged.

Here the figure employed in our context and text calls us to an illustration of one particular regarding the shield of faith. This weapon of defensive armour among the ancients was often composed of many or numerous *folds* of the same substance. And when in actual warfare, a shield was proven to be too weak or thin to resist the darts of the enemy, we easily can suppose, when the warrior felt himself injured or endangered by the weakness of his shield, the darts of the enemy penetrating it, with what anxiety and carefulness he would speed to have it strengthened, and made firm and sure, by giving it additional consistency and power of re-

sistance. And so of faith in its exercise; when the Christian warrior finds that his views of God, and of spiritual objects, are too imperfect and weak to overcome or resist the power of sinful and vain allurements, and earthly attractions and pleasures, O let him then hasten to seek unto Christ, the living and gracious Head of His own people, the bestower of all their armour; and then will he receive *from* Christ, as if the addition of another fold to his shield, which will strengthen it, and make it efficient. There is here indeed one essential point of difference, between the spiritual and the bodily shield. The warrior might strengthen the latter, and have confidence in it for future use. But this strengthening of the believer's spiritual shield is specially promised to *him* in his time of need. You are not, and we would beseech you not to expect, that your faith received will stand you in purpose for every future occasion, nay for any future occasion; but you must come anew to God, seeking addition of faith now to maintain and defend your soul, on every emergency: your faith received will indeed bestow this precious privilege upon you, that it will give you increased freedom, and holy boldness of access unto Him who has more grace to bestow: it will give you more enlarged and established views of His everlasting and sovereign love; but this of itself will not suffice: the new

temptations which assail you, the fiery darts of the wicked, which will anew be aimed at your soul, will darken and obscure those views again, unless you employ the faith received, whatever be its measure, in seeking unto Him in the time of your need, for increase of view concerning Him, and of filial confidence in Him.

We proceed now to remark, that any descriptions we can offer to you of the grace of faith, and its uses in spiritual warfare, would be imperfect and deficient indeed, if we did not specially dwell on the nature of the objects which it reveals, and the nature of those oppositions to its exercise, to which the words of our text so forcibly relate. We have already and frequently remarked, that the very nature of faith is, to reveal God and spiritual objects to the soul. But this would be a very deficient account of the matter, without our bringing before you that it is not speculative views concerning the character and attributes of God, or concerning His government, or concerning spiritual and eternal objects, which the grace of faith unfolds to the soul. Mingled at least in every view of these, there is in the very essence of faith a view given of our own interest in the objects revealed to us. For instance, the view of God as a God of supreme power and government, brings with it the conviction and feeling, that we ourselves, individually, are His creatures, His

very property, so to speak, and that He has an eternal and sovereign right to that homage and service from us which He requires in His word. Thus, the individual receiving the grace of faith, must necessarily have the conviction, as a very ingredient of faith in God, that he is himself guilty before Him, in not having rendered the homage and service due to Him. And again, in God being revealed to the soul, as He is in His glorious character, holy, righteous, and true, hating sin with an everlasting hatred, and pledged to punish it with the inflictions of His anger and wrath, the individual endowed now with faith must surely feel that he is himself deeply implicated in sin, and deeply interested in the character and government of God with regard to it. In one word, *he* must feel, who receives faith in God, that he is himself a rebellious and guilty sinner in that God's holy and righteous sight, and that he deserves the infliction of His anger and wrath. The very nature of faith then is, as a special part of it, to seal and engrave deeply and vividly on the soul these impressions. Its nature is to humble the sinner under the mighty hand of God in a heart-felt conviction of his own guilt and danger. Nor is this all, for there is in the very nature and essence of this grace what prevents the fear and dread which the convinced sinner experiences from being a mere slavish fear,

or absolute terror of punishment merely: for, being enlightened in the knowledge of God, in some measure, he beholds the vileness of sin in being committed against the God whose glory and excellency he now in some degree beholds. He not only dreads the punishment of sin, but he now abhors sin in his soul as being rebellion against God. This is what makes him indeed poor in spirit, contrite in heart, and humble. The knowledge of God which faith bestows, makes the awakened sinner not only to justify God, to acknowledge that He is righteous in His severest denunciations against sin, but causes him also to hate and abhor the sin which is in himself, and which he now sensibly feels working in his mind, and in his active habits, against the will and glory of God. The beginnings of repentance are thus mingled with the operations of faith—they are inseparable: without faith, true repentance can never begin; and without repentance it is utterly impossible that faith can exist in the soul. The grace of faith, even at this stage of its progress, when it only brings to the soul fear and anxiety, pain, and a sense of danger,—even then, it is a shield of the soul, in its spiritual warfare, which now begins. For your worst enemies, the most fiery darts of the wicked, are those in whatever shape they come to you, which would withdraw your mind

from the considerations and views, which in such a state, do nothing yet but alarm and humble you. That these fiery darts will now be aimed at the mind, we may appeal to every believer: they may be to you as silken cords, to allure you, and bind you closely to the attractions of sin, but they are fire and destruction to the interests of the soul. The serpent in Eden, we doubt not, was of beautiful colour, and shades, and hue; but the fire of its venom was deadly. Thus will sin be to the awakened mind. And God is arming the soul with a shield when He is bringing into its very conscience and feelings, even the terrors of the Lord. To save the soul from sin, it must be enlightened in the knowledge of sin, and made to tremble in the presence of its righteous and holy Judge; even until all excuses for sin be silenced—till all the palliations of sin which the sinful heart would seek to set up, and which the tempter will instigate, be taken away; and until it become the earnest cry of the soul, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and, "What must I do to be saved?" The feeling of guilt, the apprehension of danger, must be enlarged and quickened in the mind; and these, under the gracious dispensations of God, form a shield to the soul, which saves it from the fiery darts of the wicked; while those who have no such feelings are caught captive of Satan at his will, and go down to ever-

lasting destruction. Now, this shield, even in this, its incipient use, we are exhorted to take; and would to God, that you who are careless and secure, in the midst of your abounding iniquities, would seek it from God Himself, who is willing and ready to bestow it upon you. For we know, that no persuasion from men will give it; but let the testimony of God speak to your conscience, and let it warn you, as you value your immortal soul, to come now to God, beseeching Him to send His light with His truth to awaken and quicken you into a sense of your guilt and danger, while yet the day of mercy is extended to you; while yet the door of hope is open,—that you might find deliverance from the cruel bondage of sin, and everlasting safety and peace. And you whom God hath quickened into such a sense of your sinfulness, as to make you apprehensive of danger and ruin in your present condition; beware of thinking, that it can be your safety or shield to have such impressions or feelings deadened or weakened; or their operation obstructed. Painful as it may be to you, you must beseech God that He would not permit you to slumber or sleep,—that He would defend you from the enemy's snares and his fiery darts, by keeping you awake, in the considering of your state more and more deeply, until you find out where your safety lies, and until you be enabled

to say, that the Lord Jesus is your righteousness, your strength, and your safety. The darts of the wicked, to which you are peculiarly exposed, vary according to your outward circumstances and your lot, whether you be young, or middle-aged, or advanced in years. The enemy of God and your souls, is not scarce of weapons fitted to work your ruin; but be assured of this, that whatever weakens your sense of guilt, whatever draws away your mind from seriously, and solemnly, and habitually considering it, is a deadly weapon of the wicked one, whatever appearance it may outwardly assume. And though the grace of faith may bring terror upon you, yet it is the medium of your attaining to true peace with God, and true enjoyment yet, in the unspeakably glad and comforting sense of His pardoning love being extended towards you, and the everlasting arm of His strength, to maintain and uphold your soul, and to bring it finally into the everlasting kingdom of glory, where there is fulness of joy.

But the grace of faith, becomes farther, the shield of the soul, in its bestowing such views of the character of God, and of his law's demands, as will prevent the soul from taking a false rest, in its own efforts and works of amendment or reformation of conduct. This amendment assuredly will follow where faith is genuine, and accompanied, as there, it must be, with the exercise of repent-

ance. But it is not in such amendment that the believing soul will be permitted to feel its own safety or peace. By the grace of faith continuing to have its operation within, the mind will perceive, that all its own efforts come short of the end desired, that it continues to be sinful, and base, and guilty before God;—sin within continuing still to prevail against it, and the demands of God wholly unfulfilled on its part. This gives to the mind continued discomfort; and we cannot doubt, but this discomfort, this continued sense of defeat in its own efforts in making up a righteousness of its own, forms, under the presiding gracious care of the Spirit of God, means towards the soul's eventual security in the merits of a crucified and exalted Saviour; for, though a sense of guilt and danger may bring the individual to labour and strive even at all the minute details of a practical reformation, yet through the presiding power of an incipient faith in the soul, it will be felt and experienced, that all this is far from satisfying the righteous demands of God. And though it be very true, that such an individual hears of Christ, and the way of salvation through Him;—though the mind may also recur, by way of remembrance to what it has heard or learned concerning Christ by the hearing of the ear; yea, though the individual now professes to have his hope of acceptance grounded on Christ; yet all

this may be, and Christ not yet truly valued by the soul, or clearly revealed to it by faith, as its Lord and its God. The needful operation of humbling the soul, of making it to feel its own utter destitution and helplessness, must proceed so far as to leave the soul in its own experience, and not in theory merely, helpless and weak indeed. And it is at this stage also it happens, that we see many who have been, we should be ready to say, awakened unto righteousness, turning aside from following the Lord, having become satisfied with their own attainments, and their own efforts;—not indeed turning aside from an outward profession, for perhaps in this, they may continue noisy and loud, but there comes to be legibly seen on the face of their profession, a degree of self-complacency and of self-esteem, which proclaims that they have found their remedy and their peace within themselves;—they build upon a foundation of sand; and though they strive to take the polished stones of God's temple to rear up their building, yet all these will prove, on such a foundation, but "wood, hay, stubble,"—"for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." We mean in this, that they endeavour to engraft upon a heart neither humbled nor renewed, the practical graces of the Christian character,—some of such at least; and in

this they fancy, that they are rich and increased in goods; when they know not that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And when thus the soul becomes secure in its own doings, speaking peace and safety to itself, the fearful truth is, that it is pierced through by the fiery darts of the wicked, and estranged from God as a God in Christ. The wicked one can appear as an angel of light; and he has the deadly art of taking even the word of God as his darts with which to wound and deceive the soul. But from such an issue, true faith in its operation and progress, shields the soul effectually taught of God. And it does so, by its revelation and views, humbling it deeply and thoroughly in the presence of God, seeing and feeling, not only in itself that there is nothing good; but that it cannot attain to the having of any thing good by its own strength or its own attainments and efforts;—until it is led, even as its last, but its best and its only saving resource, to behold the way of salvation through Jesus Christ,—to behold Him, as the end of the law for righteousness, and to see that he is fully and freely offered, in all His benefits, with all purchased blessings, to be the everlasting safety and strength of the sinful, helpless, and perishing soul. It is when the soul is thus humbled under the feeling of its own actual sinfulness, and of its

own inability to attain to any bettering of its state in the presence of God, that the grace of faith, in its farther growth and progress, lays hold with earnestness and sincerity of the offers which the Gospel of Christ makes to it. It leads the soul to contemplate the provision made for its recovery in the everlasting covenant; to contemplate and to understand the character, the glory, and the work and offices of Christ;—to see that He is the way, the truth, and the life; that none can come to the Father but through Him, and that *in* Him a way is opened, through which full and free access to the favour of God can now be assuredly obtained: that He once died for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring sinners to God: that in Him, all the attributes of God are glorified; with respect to sin, even the sin which the believer now feels to be so predominant and so powerful in his own soul. Faith indeed does give this view of Christ; and the Spirit of God who bestows it, now subdues the soul, and makes it willing to be indebted to Christ for all its salvation; and now to be united to Christ, becomes the soul's ruling and prevailing desire. At such a stage of the believer's progress it is, that peculiar dangers, notwithstanding, beset him; it is now that the fiery darts of the wicked will be showered forth against him, and that his soul will be endangered in its spiritual course. It is true, that now the charac-

ter of God manifested in Christ, revealed to the soul by faith, will encourage the believer to draw near, and to wait upon God. Now, indeed, the believer beholds in admiring, adoring gratitude, the love, the condescension, the finished work of a humbled, crucified, and exalted Saviour; and he seeks to appropriate to himself as an individual, the blessings of which he feels that he stands in need, and which he knows well, in an exercised and enlightened mind, he can receive in none other way, but in and through Christ. But the fiery darts of the wicked will be aimed now at the believer's soul, to instigate doubts, and suspicions, and unbelieving fears, whether such offers be made to him personally or not. Now, the nature of those evil suggestions, we should rather say, their influence, is to deject,—to discourage the believer from confiding in the Lord Jesus,—doubting whether *he* as an individual can indeed be accepted, or meant, in the terms and declarations of the glorious gospel of Christ. And the wicked one whose fiery darts before, were instigations to the mind, to make the believer think lightly and indifferently of sin, now substitutes for these, still more fiery darts, causing the soul to conclude, that its sins are too many to be really pardoned, or taken away; that *its* utter unworthiness is such, that the Lord will now neither receive nor bless it;—that it may weary and vex itself with desires, and

prayers, and entreaties, but that it is impossible all can suffice—God, says the deceiver, hath been too much provoked by thee, and wearied by thy sins, that He should now listen to the voice of thy supplications, or that He should show thee favour. And to this will be added another fiery dart of temptation :—Is this not proof to thee, in thine own experience, of grace not being for thee? Art thou become holier or better by all thy seekings of grace, and by all thy mournings for sin? With these suggestions, the believer's mind will be but too apt to close; and closing with these, is to be wounded by the fiery darts of the wicked. But here, the shield of faith must be put on, and wielded, and exercised. The measure of faith by which the believer has hitherto been kept spiritually awake, and facing the contest, will not now stand him in stead—the shield must be strengthened and made now firm and sure, to resist the fiery darts of the wicked, and to overcome in the contest; and instead of its being now the interest of the believer, to fold the hands, and to mourn over his own doubts, and fears, and feebleness,—it is his interest and his privilege, to wait upon God for increase of faith;—yea, to come to Him for faith renewedly, for he will now conclude in his own experience and view that he never had any such thing as faith before. If such be your state, my friends, any one of you now in

our hearing, O, seek unto God, unto Him who is God and man, and who ruleth ever for your good. Lay hold of His own gracious promises, which are given you in His word of truth,—His encouragements and His offers; and consider their import. This indeed of itself will not constitute the faith which would enable you to appropriate Him to yourselves; but it is the warrant which God puts into your hand for applying unto Himself for faith, who is its author and finisher; and, assuredly, you shall experience that He is faithful in promise,—that He will accomplish your desire,—that He will save you from the fiery darts of the wicked one; and enable you to say, "The Lord is my helper;"—"If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Now, in this condition, the influence and exercise of faith will be, to lead the mind to the cross of Christ, to see there His love displayed, to see there sin punished, and, in the person and work of Christ, God glorified,—His law magnified and made honourable; and the wonderful way of acceptance with Him, laid open. Even together with such an exercise of faith, there will come to the soul, unbelieving doubts,—Are these things for *me?* Such doubts are the fiery darts of the

wicked, which the shield of faith alone can quench; and this it can only do by its receiving additional strength through the ministration of God's holy Spirit to the soul. No reasoning on the subject, of human device or correctness, will quench those fiery darts of the wicked. Our directions and warnings, our charges or encouragements to the troubled, unsettled mind, which feels now the preciousness of an appropriating faith, will not bestow that faith upon it; we may speak even as the oracles of God,—we might speak as with the tongues of angels, every word might be in full and correct consistency with the written word; but none else than the Spirit of God can furnish the soul with the shield of faith, to suit the believer's need. And here may we not call upon those who feel themselves repelled and driven back continually from the exercise of an appropriating faith in Christ, and tell them how very grievously they do err, in all their efforts and anxieties and doubts, when they do not cast themselves upon the Lord, presenting simply but earnestly unto His own omniscience, and everlasting love and power, their unspeakable need of this shield of faith to the soul. They will seek to other means, and to other resources; but what you need is, to come directly and at once to God,—to spread forth your cause, and to urge your suit with *Him*, according to the gracious invitations of His own

word. And here the very counsel of our text, is well entitled to have a permanent place in your meditations, and view, and in the very utterance of your supplication to God. The counsel of our text would never have been given, unless the grace, the shield of faith were as assuredly provided for you, as the simplest and least benefit of which you stand in need. "Taking the shield of faith," surely implies, that it is prepared for your use; that He who is its author, has it freely to bestow upon you, and in such measure, and strength, and power, as is necessary to your circumstances and state, whatever these may be. And well do we know, that when we, or when God in His word of truth addresses you, concerning an appropriating faith on the Lord Jesus, your obtaining the full persuasion and certainty, that to you individually He is offered, that for you He suffered, and bled, and died,—that for you as an individual, He rose again triumphantly from the grave, conquering death, and Him who had the power of death, even the devil;—that for *you* individually, He ascended up on high leading captivity captive, and procuring gifts *for* you;—that for *you* individually, He rules and reigns in the heavens, and makes intercession with God in your behalf;—that to you individually, He addresses all the promises, and encouragements, and consolations, and prospects of the

Gospel; then, we know, that your language will be, This is too much for me to expect, that God should bestow it upon *me*, or that I should now attain to it. But consider, we entreat you, that this is the language of unbelief, and that nothing can be more dishonouring to God, more ruinous to your own soul. Such language is evidence to show, that the fiery darts of the wicked have already indeed overcome you, in so great a measure, as to make you act in all this, a part *most* dishonouring to God. Your spiritual enemy may suggest to you, that such language is that of humility; but alas, it is far otherwise; it is from pride of heart!—thinking you must render yourself better, ere the Lord can accept or bless you. Such pride, and such reasoning, give evidence, that the enemy of your soul prevails against you; for in whatever way or shape his suggestions or temptations may come, they will produce the fruit of pride and rebelliousness in the mind. You must therefore seek unto God Himself, and inquire in His holy place; you must set yourself earnestly to ask the ministration of His Spirit to your soul; that the glorious light and revelation of faith may prevail and abound with you; and that you may be enabled to rejoice in the Lord Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh; and to glory in Him alone. Without the grace of faith arriving at this appropriating exercise, it cannot

be an effectual shield to the soul. And we would entreat every one in our hearing, carefully to observe and consider, that wherever true faith is implanted, however weak or imperfect its workings yet may be, that it earnestly seeks forward to this issue; the believing soul cannot be satisfied without arriving at this, whatever discouragements it may meet with in the way. Do you seek for comfort, peace, and enjoyment? Seek first for faith in Christ,—even that appropriating faith which receives and embraces Him as the health and strength of the soul—which assures the soul, that to itself the Saviour of sinners is freely offered; and that in Him, the soul shall assuredly obtain salvation. We know, nor can you be ignorant, that the doctrine of assurance has been fearfully abused. But not only is there such a doctrine, but every true believer must seek this assurance, as the true shield of the soul against the fiery darts of the wicked. It is not the assurance of sense we now speak of. The assurance of sense is, the feeling and persuasion, that we are now in Christ, and that our souls are converted and rendered obedient already to God. But the assurance of faith is the persuasion, that Christ does assuredly invite and call me individually, and offers freely all His merits, and all the gifts of His purchase personally to me. We would earnestly urge every soul in our hearing to press forward

to this assurance of faith. It is by it, that the awakened soul becomes rooted and grounded in love, and that you can make progress in the needful acquirements of your personal sanctification. It is the faith once delivered to the saints, for which you must earnestly contend. It is the shield of the soul, in all its spiritual warfare. We entreat you to seek it from Christ, and to honour Him in waiting upon Him, that He may bestow it. And with that shield of light, and knowledge, and love, your souls will be safe from every assault of the enemy. His fiery darts may indeed terrify and disturb you; but they will not wound your souls unto death. You will go on, armed with this shield of faith, overcoming your spiritual enemies, and growing more and more in the knowledge of God, in conformity to His image, and in the fruits of righteousness and of holiness.

SERMON IX

EPHES. vi. 17.

And take the helmet of salvation.

THE experience of every believer in Christ who is engaged in prosecuting the Christian warfare, will readily coincide in two general statements, namely, that the salvation of the Gospel is precious, and also that they have not yet themselves obtained full participation in its blessings; indeed, the experience of most believers, perhaps, will be a prevailing anxiety, or fear, lest they come short of obtaining the salvation to which they look as supremely precious, and which they earnestly seek to possess. But whatever be the believer's standing, or stage of advancement in spiritual life or attainments, we mean, however weak they may be, however *little* advanced on the way that leadeth to Zion, one feature of character must be found continually attaching to them, a viewing of the salvation of Christ as precious; and from this there will be found inseparable, an exercise and habitual effort in seeking to attain more and more of its blessings. These are characteristic

features of spiritual life, just as essentially forming a part of it in the soul, as bodily activity and mental affections or desires form a part of our bodily and rational life. There *may* be, and truly there *are*, periods or seasons with every one of the children of God, at which they are more lively and vigorous, in pursuit of spiritual blessings; and times at which they are more dull and inactive. The latter happen always through the prevalence of some cherished sin, whether it be known or unknown to themselves at the time, what individual sin it is. And at all events, it must be true of every sincere believer in Christ, that he neither seeks, nor willingly consents to relax his efforts after the attainment of spiritual benefits. It is altogether contrary to the new nature bestowed on the believer in conversion to God, to turn away willingly from following after God, as his portion and his exceeding great reward. To cast off the fear of the Lord, and to follow after the gratifications of sin by deliberate choice, would be deadly violence done to the very being of spiritual life in the soul. What temporary issue may happen, under the violent assaults of Satan's temptations, it would be unwise to speculate upon. Doubtless, many of the children of God have been fearfully overcome by them, and their prospects of salvation awfully brought into jeopardy, but from such melancholy results every

believer will shrink with terror, and those who unhappily fall into them, if they be indeed of God's spiritual family, will come most acutely to feel in themselves the bitterness of their sin, the misery and wo of their condition; and when, in consequence, their prospects are the darkest, their cry to God will not be the less loud, nor their supplications the less earnest, seeking for those blessings, from which they feel, as if their aggravated guilt had cut them entirely away. In one word, no true follower of the Lord Jesus can find comfort in sin, or can experience happiness, true happiness, in any other course, than in that of following on to know the Lord, and seeking to partake of the blessings purchased by Christ for those that were rebellious. It is to this nature and disposition bestowed through abounding grace upon the awakened and quickened soul of the true believer, that the words of our text are specially suited and addressed, "Take the helmet of salvation." There is a peculiarity in the expression, to which it is necessary that we attend. It is evidently enough the general meaning of the precept, that salvation should form to the Christian a special defence from the assaults of those spiritual enemies against whom he has to contend, that he should lay hold of this salvation, and, as it were, put it on as his helmet, the defence of his head, in the day of danger or battle. But then, it will be asked, how

can the believer do this, when his feelings and experience may be, most impressively, in his own mind, that he has not yet attained to this salvation, that he has it not in possession; and how then can he put it on, or make use of it as his helmet? This we can only explain, and the explanation is abundantly sufficient, by informing you, that there is here employed a common figure of speech, salvation is put for the desire and especially for the *hope* of salvation. It is a mode of speech so common, that it needs scarcely be called a figure at all. Let us suppose, for instance, a leader or commander in any actual warfare, addressing and encouraging those who fought under him, to withstand with firmness and coolness and courage, the onsets of an earnest and vigorous foe, and to quit themselves like men in the deadly strife that lay before them; what more natural for him than to lead their minds to think on the benefits of obtaining a full and decisive victory over the enemy; he would represent this issue to them, in all the brightest colours of imagery which his mind could command. He would so lead them to think, and so to feel, that the idea of victory and triumph should be that uppermost in their mind: its advantages, and benefits, and renown, when thus held before them, would enter as it were into their souls, would inspirit them to deeds of valour and strength in the contest, and the

cheering assurances given them, that victory would not be doubtful if *they* acted their part as brave and worthy soldiers of the sovereign and country who owned them, and who looked to them with confidence, on such a day of trial and danger. This would all go undoubtedly far to stir up their energies in the contest, especially when they felt that their cause was just, and that their sovereign's honour and their country's good were alike dear to their hearts, though the victory was not yet gained, though peril and dangers, and perhaps death itself lay between individuals of their number and the issue to which they looked forward, yet victory, in its full and brilliant significancy, would be already inscribed on their hearts, and as their bodily armour, whether defensive or offensive, would avail their personal actings, the single idea of victory, conveying as it did such vivid impressions to their mind, would nerve them with moral courage, and give the truest energy to their personal doings. And it is thus, that, though salvation be not actually attained in all its benefits by the believer, yet, when he knows what it is, of what it consists, what and how precious *are* its benefits, who the God is who gives it, the Saviour who has purchased it, and who the enemies are that oppose it, he feels animated and encouraged, and strengthened in the spiritual warfare. If *he once* discontinue, if he cease to consider the

end of his calling, he will cease to have courage or fortitude in the difficulties of that calling; they will appear to him formidable, appalling, and insurmountable, and he will no longer have spiritual nerve or energy to contend with the enemies of the soul. The comparison we have made between temporal and spiritual warfare is in many respects unworthy. At best, temporal warfare will be, during the contest, but of uncertain or probable issue, and when there is victory achieved, the triumph is too often but vain, and its benefits vague and unreal. Not so the Christian's warfare, when he looks to the glory of God, and the soul's final salvation. There, the victory is not doubtful but sure, and the results are everlastingly satisfying, and substantial, and glorious; they are peace and joy eternal, a kingdom that cannot be moved. And He who is the Captain of salvation to all His own people, leads them onwards to a warfare in which they have only to strive with enemies which their glorious leader has already conquered himself; and the exhortations, the encouragements, the promises which He gives, are all faithful and true, founded and given on the very basis of the unchangeable attributes of God. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon

him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." It is then the prospect, the view, the *hope*, above all other things of this great and eternal salvation, that is meant in the words of our text, which we are desired and exhorted to take, that it may prove to us as a helmet did to the soldier in temporal warfare, a defence for the head in the day of battle and trial. In Scripture language, the head is often put for the whole man, and it is also put for the life. And when there is mentioned here an helmet, or covering for the head, and that this defence is the hope of salvation, there is conveyed, a most important and practical lesson—it is clearly made known, that without this hope the Christian cannot go forward in the way that leads to everlasting life. Now, such a hope being established and exercised in the mind, manifestly depends on certain other graces of the Christian character, being first implanted, and arriving at some degree of strength and influence. And here the connexion in which our text stands with the portions of the preceding context, on which we have been on former occasions

addressing you, is significant, and highly important. The mind must first be persuaded in an effectual and spiritual manner of the truth of God's word, and the reality of all those spiritual objects of which it testifies; and this truth must form to the mind, and conscience, and heart, continually its girdle of strength, or rather this persuasion and conviction of the truth must do so. And the righteousness of God is manifested in this truth of His. His righteousness as the avenger of sin, and the bestower of glory, this manifested in Christ, and the righteousness of Christ as it is freely offered, to the guilty sinful soul, must form the breastplate of the mind, securing it from the accusations of guilt which will come to it, and from the adversary's temptations regarding that guilt. The preparation of the Gospel of peace thus made manifest in Christ procuring peace with God to the soul, must be put on, even as shoes for the feet, that the soul may be enabled to walk in peace with God, in the way of His holy commandments. All these have to be strengthened, defended, maintained in exercise, and kept vigorous by the shield of faith being placed, as it were over them. The principle, or grace, or faculty of faith in the soul, must be sustained in exercise, that the individual may have habitually before him, the objects which are spiritual and eternal; and especially, the view of Christ as the Sa-

viour, which assures the soul, that to it individually all the offers of the Gospel are freely made, and cordially addressed on the part of God;—that the evil suggestions of the adversary, and his fiery temptations, may be effectually resisted; but to the progress onward of the believer towards the end of his calling, he must have active desires, and real substantial hopes, of obtaining those things testified of in the truth of God, prepared in His righteousness, set before the soul in the blessed preparation of the Gospel of peace—and contemplated, received in offer by the grace of faith, and when that faith is established in the soul, and exercised in the practical goings, then there must arise from it, as its blessed fruit, a lively hope of those things which are now contemplated, being actually obtained by the soul. It is this *hope* being established in the mind, and finding operation there, which proves indeed, that the grace of faith is genuine and true. Without such a hope, the mind cannot be cordially exercised in the things which belong to its peace. At least we may assuredly say that it will but toil on heavily indeed, in every, or in any Christian duty; the mind will be governed by fear, and by dread, until this blessed hope of salvation,—the hope of obtaining it fully, and largely, and perfectly at last, be firmly implanted in the mind. And without the hope of obtaining eternal salva-

tion, if duties cannot be cordially practised, much less may we truly say, can difficulties, and trials, and hardships be sustained, or patiently endured, or finally overcome. And most clearly does this precious grace show, in its very appearance and forms, if we may so speak, that it is of God;—for O, how manifest is it to every believer in Christ, that the actual hope of our obtaining salvation, cannot be given us by any reasoning of our own, or of others, till God Himself set His hand to the work, and strengthen the soul to have it. However clearly the voice and the counsels of God address the trembling soul in the day of its effectual calling, in the times of its feeling of sin,—however clearly God sets before us in His truth, that salvation is free, and freely offered to *you* as an individual, still the mind will continue to reason on its own principles, and not on the foundation of God's authority, or of His gracious promises;—it will continue to turn away in doubt, and suspicion, and fear, and distrust, concerning all that God so graciously sets before it,—until the Spirit of God work faith in the soul,—and that appropriating faith in the offers of Christ, of which we formerly spoke;—and how hard is it to think that you will listen to the adversary of your soul,—that you will give credit to his malicious and malignant suggestions, and that the truth and assurances of the ever-living and

gracious God will not be received by you, as addressed to yourselves;—how fearfully does this manifest the power of original sin in the soul?—But what is impossible with man is possible with God; and He sends forth, by His gracious Spirit, light with His truth,—and faith *is* implanted in the mind in the day of His power, and inseparably connected with that faith stands the hope spoken of in our text—it will then arise in the mind—and though till then, the individual looked but with suspicion and distrust on all the counsels of God regarding himself and his prospects for eternity personally;—then he will lift his head with humble but firm confidence in the Lord; and he will receive, as the concomitant of this blessed and glorious hope, the spirit of adoption, towards the Lord his maker, and the Lord his Saviour and guide. We would seek to impress it upon you, as most infallibly true, that on the existence of this hope within you, depends the manner of spirit of which you will be with respect to God. Deeply did an inspired apostle feel the value of this hope, when he says,—"Blessed be the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the

power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." The feeling of hope in the mind, may appear at first sight, to those who do not duly consider it, to be a very vague and undefinable sentiment. But it is far otherwise. It is not a sentiment, but a real, and powerful, and influential affection. Nothing can actually be hoped for, until first it be contemplated, considered, and esteemed precious or desirable by the mind. On whatever object any hope is exercised, that object must first be subjected to the scrutiny of the understanding and judgment, and esteemed in some certain degree to be desirable. We speak here of any natural hope; and it is the same of this spiritual and religious hope;—it cannot be exercised, until salvation itself be first considered, yea, until it become to the soul as the one thing needful and precious. The understanding must be first enlightened, and the judgment renewed, so as to be now a spiritual judgment, as a distinct faculty of the soul. The judgment of the *natural* mind is opposed to the hope of the Gospel; for it makes choice and preference of earthly and temporal objects; and salvation is neither actually beheld by that mind, nor considered by it as precious. Salvation comes not home to the natural mind, as that which deserves its labour, or its perseverance, or efforts: the natural judgment acts totally in the dark with re-

spect to things divine. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But in the endowment of the mind with the grace of faith there is a change which passes upon the inner man; and on no faculty or power of the mind more than on the judgment, by which the individual is led to make choice of some objects and to reject others. When this change passes upon that faculty, then the things approven are desired; and until they be thus desired, they cannot be hoped for in truth.

But besides, it enters into the very nature of hope, that the mind not only passes judgment upon the object desired, but also upon the way by which it may be obtained. If there be insurmountable obstacles apprehended or seen, or felt to be in the way, then there cannot be hope exercised with regard to it. Now, this is very much the case with respect to salvation, when the mind is at first effectually awakened. It begins to see the value and excellency of salvation. The judgment is at least under process of renewal; but until faith come, the mind is kept in bondage; it strives, no doubt, to obtain salvation, but the sense of guilt repels it from truly hoping;—from hoping at least in a spiritual manner: the hopes which the individual may begin to have, on the

foundation of his own merits, and his own exertions, are overcome and dissipated, under every renewed view and feeling of guiltiness that comes to the soul; it is faith, conveying a knowledge of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and enlightening the soul in the knowledge of *Him*, which brings *in* the hope of the Gospel, founded on *its* eternal and abundant provisions, made in Christ Jesus the Lord, for the bestowal of salvation upon itself individually. The value of salvation is now clearly apprehended and seen, in such a manner that the soul is quickened to desire it as its own only sure inheritance and portion. The way of its attainment is seen, in the light and revelation of faith; and a very essential part of that faith being an apprehending of the offer as made to the individual, now there is hope, and it is founded on the proper foundation, on that which is laid in Zion, Jesus Christ; and the more the soul is led in faith to view and consider this foundation on which hope rests, the more will that hope rise into liveliness and power of exercise in the soul. The character and the counsels of God are now revealed to the mind in such measure, that it apprehends the nature of divine grace, its sovereignty, its fulness, its freeness in Jesus Christ; and the love manifested forth in Him, not to His friends, to the worthy, or to profitable servants, but unto those that were

His enemies. The view of this divine and unspeakable love, kindles the grace of hope in the soul, and thus brings it near to God. The nature of this hope of salvation is most clearly unfolded to us, (Romans v.) where it is fully shown that it rests upon Christ, and upon the love of God manifested towards sinners in Him. "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some will even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

We would here further remark, that the nature of true spiritual hope is to connect the mind more and more intimately with Christ, in His person, and doings, and sufferings, and in His glorious intercession and reign in heaven. It is,

indeed, the grace of faith by which He is revealed to the soul, but *when* revealed, there is hope begun, and this hope depends upon the revelation made of Christ through faith, for its continued exercise. It cannot subsist, and far less can it grow into influence, without this intimate relationship and intercourse with Christ, which faith as it were, lays to its hand, revealing Christ to the soul, and God manifested through Him. This hope lays hold of Christ as the surety of the soul, manifested by faith: it cleaves to Christ as its refuge and its strength, in looking forward to ultimate salvation. And thus the people of God are described by the Spirit, in the word, as those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them;" "which hope we have," says the same Scripture, "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." Contemplating Christ at every step of His glorious working to purchase salvation for sinners; following *Him* in His blessed work, in His doctrines of grace and truth, in His acts of mercy and kindness to the bodies and souls of men; in His sufferings especially, and His agonies of soul for sin; in His death, and in His resurrection, and His triumph over death, and hell, and the grave; in His as-

cension again into heaven, and in His gracious and faithful promises to His people—the grace of hope is strengthened, and obtains its sacred influence in the soul; and its influence continually is towards a progress in personal sanctification. Sin is abhorred with a heart-felt and sensible hatred. Its nature and deceitfulness now appear manifest to the soul, and its allurements are contradicted, warred against, and more and more overcome in the habitual practice. "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It is this hope that will sweeten every commandment of Christ to the moral faculties and powers of the mind. They are not only, says the soul that truly hopes, commandments that are good, and expedient, and just, but they are Christ's commandments; His, who is my hope, my beloved, and only Saviour, on whose everlasting love, on whose finished work, on whose eternal power and Godhead, on whose fulness of grace, my soul rests in hope, that I shall not assuredly be left by Him to perish, but shall be kept safe in His Almighty and gracious hands, even until the day of His coming. And, O, it is in looking forward to that blessed consummation, that the hope becomes indeed that of which our text especially speaks—

the hope of salvation. It anticipates this salvation in all its fulness of glory, and joy, not merely a deliverance from hell, but from sin, from Satan, and from the world—from an evil heart, and from all spiritual enemies, when they shall no longer be once permitted to come near the soul, or to rob it of any portion of its everlasting fulness of joy.

Another peculiarity of hope, as is well known, and already anticipated in the remarks we have just made, is, to look forward to something now future—to anticipate from that which is future, the pleasure, or enjoyment, or gratification, from which present circumstances exclude us. Let the worldling tell how deceitful is this hope regarding temporal objects; and prudence will dictate to the man of experience in this life's affairs, and its varying, turbulent scenes, how necessary it is for his own comfort and happiness, to keep the dictates of worldly hope under due control, to prevent his future disappointment, and to mitigate the disappointments which may come to him. But, O, how different is the Gospel of Christ, in its provisions for man's eternal happiness and good! If it be a hope arising from, and accompanying faith in its exercise; if it be a hope founded on Christ, and on God known and manifested in Him, to the soul; it cannot be too fondly indulged, or too longingly

cherished, when looking forward to the consummation of life eternal with God. Let its prospects of happiness be ever so high, and its desires for spiritual enjoyments ever so large, there will none of them be disappointed or mocked by the coming realities of eternity. Nay, it is the Christian's loss,—unlike the drudges and slaves of the world,—it is the Christian's loss, how faintly and feebly he indulges the hope of his calling, and contemplates its end; for the reality is greater than the highest Christian hope ever yet arrived at anticipating; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." "In my Father's house," says the Redeemer unto him, "are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

But the nature of hope is further, to dwell on the *specialties* of that deliverance or good, to which it earnestly looks forward; not to have mere vague ideas floating in the mind, regarding an anticipated good, but it is conversant with the *elements* of future expected happiness; and surely the more that an individual is pressed with difficulties, and hardships, and straits, at the time

now present;—when there is hope cherished, the more intimately and distinctly will the benefits of the expected deliverance rise in prospect before him. And surely the more that hope, if well grounded, has this exercise in the mind, the more will that mind be nerved with courage and fortitude to withstand its present surrounding evils, be they ever so hard. And it is thus that the believer's soul is strengthened by hope, to withstand his continual trials, and temptations, and hardships. He looks forward to the expected salvation, and his courage is confirmed and renewed. So did Paul, and his brethren of the faith, when he says, "I know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." And surely it is the sad loss and folly of the children of God themselves, if they be found expecting their portion of happiness *here*, in spiritual matters, as if they had

nothing to look for but joy, and comfort, and peace, while a body of sin and death yet holds them in bondage, where sin is yet unconquered in the soul, turning it away from a close walk and communion with God. It must, and does tell grievously on their spiritual comfort and peace, when they put not on the helmet of salvation—the hope, the desire of salvation, and the view of it, which true hope is ever calculated to give. They expect their pleasures and their comforts now, so that when hope is not exercised, final salvation not looked forward unto, their hearts are discouraged, the enemy prevails against them, and they are misled and beguiled by his vile suggestions and wiles, to conclude and to write bitter things against themselves, when their divine Saviour is seeking to do them good, and to show them the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that they may prize His salvation the more, according to its value and glory. Without, then, this view and hope of eternal and complete salvation being exercised by the soul, it cannot walk in the enemy's country; it cannot be sustained in a faithful adherence to Christ. Nothing will be heard from it but murmurs and complaints, distrusts, and suspicions of Him, whose love is thus dishonoured, by its being distrusted, and by the salvation which it has procured, not being contemplated in the light of hope and confidence of its being soon

to arrive. But among the specialties dwelt upon by the true hope of salvation, we may farther remark, that freedom from a sinful and disobedient heart, a proud, corrupt, and perverse earthly nature, enters particularly into the Christian's view. While he strives against the evil workings of these, the Gospel brings to his soul the assurance that he is not always to be left struggling thus with the workings and power of an insidious and malignant foe; that this very sin which is in him, has been conquered by Him who now promises to the believer the like victory; that now his salvation draweth more near than before; that every succeeding day of the life he now lives on earth is bringing nearer to hand the consummation of his final and full redemption; that He in whose hands are the issues of all things, and all power in heaven and on earth, is his Saviour, and surety, and friend; that his Saviour knows of all his trials, all his contests with sin, all his fears of being overcome in the spiritual warfare; and that though the believer, through lack of faith, may, alas, cease to look to the Saviour, that Saviour ceases not to look unto him, and to have care for his soul. Surely this may well encourage the believer, and animate all his spirit within him to run with *patience* the race set before him. Look to the eternal securities on which your salvation is offered, on which it rests, on which the pro-

mises are addressed to you. They are *not* securities which can *fail*, yea, they can never be moved; and while you feel that in you there dwelleth nothing good, that you cannot by any virtue or energy that is in you, once withstand the attacks of your spiritual enemies, the Lord Jesus hath taken that upon Himself. He is strong in might, and until *His* strength fail, there shall not an evil conquer your soul; and your trials, though now severe, are not to be long. Lift up then your hopes and desires unto *Him*, place the affairs of your soul in His almighty and gracious hands; He hath undertaken for you, and your victory is sure. Its triumph will speedily come, and the enemies which now vex and harass you, shall be overcome by His power, and your eternal happiness will then be but commencing, and never throughout eternity itself to know diminution or change. The cares and anxieties of life, with all their burden and wo, grievous and sore as they *may* be, are all under the appointment of Christ, and under His wise and faithful control. And soon they will come to an end, and it will then be seen and acknowledged by each one of the redeemed of the Lord, that they were well and wisely ordered, and appointed for your ultimate good. *Think* not that *here* the world can bring you your comfort or peace. In this world, says Christ, you shall have *tribulation*: and did you

look to *Him* as the governor and ruler of all, well might you derive comfort, and consolation, and hope from the eternity of His counsels and the unsearchable wisdom of all His gracious appointments. From all present evils He will speedily redeem you with an eternal deliverance. And all the tempter's power and snares, and his lying deceits and allurements will be made conducive to your best interests at last, by His almighty power and love, who spoiled principalities and powers, who made a show of them openly triumphing over them on the cross, and in His resurrection again from the dead. And consider, if indeed you be awakened to seek for holiness to the Lord, as the desire of your soul, His image to be again restored upon you in all its beauty, and excellency, and lasting duration, that the salvation which He purchased will bestow this infallibly upon you, that you shall, by merit of His purchase, have put on you for ever the pure robe of His righteousness, not only in its atoning merit, to deliver you from sin and its guilt, but in its excellency and glory as the likeness of His own eternal purity and holiness of character. Such is the salvation which He purchased for you; and while you feel that yet it is not yours in actual possession, consider that it is made sure to your soul in *Him*, and let its hope, and its blessed prospect, be as a defence upon your head now in

the day of your probation and trial on earth. O let it encourage your soul to depart from sin, to spurn its debasing polluting allurements, which grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom the people of God are sealed and sanctified. This view of salvation, implies, that you consider it as belonging unto the Lord Jesus your living head, not belonging to you by inherent, or by natural right, but secured in the eternal covenant for you, its purchase price already dearly and fully paid in the sufferings and conquest of Him who now graciously calls you. And are not its offers made to you, and its promises revealed? Have you felt the constraining influence of faith, in His word, assuring your soul that He is true in His promises, and that He will never leave nor forsake you? Consider more and more their everlasting foundation and sources. Look unto Him in the light of Gospel truth, and seek that His Spirit would guide you, and give you, renewedly, strength to cast yourselves upon His faithfulness and His truth. Without faith you cannot have hope, and let your soul, who seek His salvation, draw near to Him according to His own recorded authority. THAT can never fail, neither will any individual soul fail of ultimate and eternal salvation, that comes to Christ on *this* sacred and gracious footing. But allowing that you have come unto Him, that you seek daily to be found waiting upon

Him, that you can testify to His own omniscience, as the desire of your soul, that you may be sanctified unto Him, and be for ever with Him where He is, that you may behold His glory; yet you must seek from Him to have the hope of that glory strengthened and revived in your mind continually, else you cannot be found resisting your spiritual enemies.

The salvation of Christ, in all its spiritual blessings, the full deliverance which He hath wrought out, and which He freely offers unto you now, must be held in your view. You must walk by faith, and not by sight; and "Now," saith the Spirit by an apostle, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is vain, my friends, to imagine, that we can both live to the world and for salvation. IT *must* be made to us the *one* thing needful, and kept habitually in view. That end is glorious and eternal; the prize of immortality is the true Christian's object, not in word alone, but in heart and mind. The mind must be set upon it with earnestness and with devotedness of purpose. It must continually come home to us, in our daily conversation and walk, else, it is impossible, that we can be growing in fitness for its enjoyment. What is all in this life if salvation be not attained, but a vain show which hastens daily to close in death, when this mortal must put on immortality!

And until you come to Christ for power to work in you, both to will and to do, and the work of faith with power, profess as you may, and speculate as you may, but you cannot have any well grounded hope for eternity. Is that to be counted a hope for eternity which permits its great and solemn realities to be habitually absent from the mind, and the objects of time *as* habitually present as eternity is absent to your thoughts, and desires, and affections? Let us not deceive ourselves with a vain and groundless hope which must perish at the hour of trial, when eternity is presented before us in all its great and solemn realities. We must know of it here. We must now be made conversant with it. This is not our rest, make it not therefore your portion.

SERMON X.

EPHESIANS vi. 17. latter clause.

And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

IN addressing you upon this subject, there are considerations connected with it, which we must at the outset earnestly seek to bring before you. We have been already endeavouring to make known to you, the practical importance of each part of the Christian armour, mentioned and commended in the preceding context. And we would now, at the outset here, desire to uphold in your view, the living and eternal importance to your own souls, that you should experience the value and uses of all its special and several parts. We are not to view the declarations of Scripture, of whatever kind, as partaking of any thing like what is commonly called accident, or chance, even in the order of their announcement. There is eternal wisdom, unerring purpose, in every connexion wherein they stand, with respect to each other, and with respect to us. There is

a purpose of grace, on the very being and exercise of which in the character and mind of the eternal God, every announcement of Scripture is suspended, and, according to which, each of them is presented to the believing mind. The precept or doctrine contained in the words of our text, will appear, to many a mind, as one which is very plain in its import and bearing;—that its practical amount can be nothing more, than an enjoining upon us, to cultivate an intimate and growing acquaintance with the word of God. And observe, my friends, in your own minds, what are the expectations which you cherish in connexion with this growing acquirement on your own part; perhaps that your spiritual duties and exercises will become more easy, more pleasant, and more profitable, in proportion to the advances you make in this valuable, and desirable acquirement. This view and expectation, we are far from condemning as altogether unsound. But we would wish to examine, or rather that you yourselves should examine, on what foundation it rests in your own minds. For if the view be cherished, or the expectation indulged, on the ground of any inherent virtue in the word itself, literally understood or applied to your mind, or accumulated more and more in the treasury of your own understanding or memory, the result will miserably disappoint your fondest ex-

pectations; and still more, if on the ground of fancied ability in yourselves, to take up or to wield this sword of the Spirit; by your own natural understanding and strength, the result will only prove to you discomfiture and defeat in the Christian warfare. He would indeed be esteemed an unfit and inexperienced soldier, who, in the day of battle, would seize a sword, and go forth with it to the contest, unarmed in every other respect, and inexperienced, untaught how to use, or to wield it. And looking to the figure employed by the inspired writer, in this, and in all the preceding context,—a figure closely and accurately adapted to the usages of warfare among those who were more immediately addressed,—we must recollect, that for the soldier to think of using the sword, without the shield and helmet, would be mere folly; nay, it was known, and fully experienced, that all or each one of the warrior's findings, in its own place, was equally necessary as another; and that whatever success in warfare might be looked for, when *all* the armour was on, *without* its being *all* put on, nothing could be expected but shame, and defeat, and death. Then we must remember, that it is not by having recourse to one Christian or religious duty, to the prejudice of others, that we can be maintained in the warfare inseparable from spiritual life. And in calling you to the exercise of all the duties of

the Christian character, which our context sets before us,—do we impose upon you a yoke, or a burden? Surely, my friends, we do not. He were a miserable soldier indeed, to whom his armour would prove a burden or yoke; and with the Christian, who is one in truth, every one of those graces or duties will be helping to the other, not to burden the soul, but to quicken and strengthen it, in spiritual life; and to give to it, each day and hour, fitness, alacrity, and holy courage, to the sustaining of spiritual conflicts and trials, in the knowledge, and love, and obedience of God. And however you may admire one Christian grace above another; if you be truly exercised in this actual warfare, your experience must be, that each succeeding day of your life here, you must be furnished with all of them anew from God.—"Take unto you, the *whole* armour of God." There is doubtless a period at which they are begun to be put on, but in the future spiritual life of the believer, this *taking* unto him, must be an habitually renewed act; he must come and seek for, and receive this *whole* armour anew from Him, who hath it all to bestow. In now endeavouring to bring under your view, what is especially signified in the words of our text on the present occasion, you cannot but be struck, on reflection, with the place of vast importance, which is here given to the word of God, when it is called

the sword of the Spirit. All the preceding parts of the armour mentioned, are wholly defensive. But the sword is also an offensive weapon. In plainer language, perhaps, all the armour formerly mentioned, is calculated to protect the person from the assaults of the enemy, and the other hardships incident to warfare; but that mentioned in our text is suited to a different purpose, to assail or attack the enemy, to wound, to slay, or to put the enemy to flight. And when we consider that the ultimate successful issue of all the warfare must depend upon this being actually accomplished; when we consider, that no mere defending of the person will be sufficient;—that however successfully a contest may be maintained while we act merely on the defensive, it cannot in that way be terminated,—then, the importance of the offensive part of the armour must rise in our view. It is true indeed, in temporal warfare, sometimes it happens that mere defensive acting may secure the victory in the end; and this but comparatively seldom. And it can happen alone, when the hostile parties are on somewhat of an equal footing; and each of them but ill supplied with resources and means of offensive war. But far otherwise is the case in the spiritual warfare we speak of. We are on *no* footing of equality with our spiritual adversaries. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principa-

lities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Such are their resources and power indeed, that all the testimony of Scripture agrees in setting before us, that there is none other power equal or superior to theirs, but the Almighty power of God alone. You cannot but see, in the passage now cited from our context, the view in which these enemies are held by the inspired apostle, when he calls them principalities, powers, and rulers. Then, in the next place, bear in mind, that our salvation depends altogether, upon these enemies being overcome by us, not merely in our being kept in safety from them, with our persons as it were unscathed, and unharmed—this will not do—the warfare must be offensive, as well as defensive; actual deeds must be performed by us, of Christian and spiritual courage, and strength, and hardihood. For, as has well been observed, by commentators on this passage, in all the Christian's armour here set forth, there is none for the back; signifying, that however useful defensive armour may be, still there is no provision whatever made for the Christian soldier's escape or flight, by turning away from the enemy. It is all front armour which is provided for his use, through the Gospel of Christ, or rather by Christ in the Gospel. Now, from these considerations, we

think it cannot fail to appear to every mind truly awakened into any solemn consideration of this subject, that the importance attached to the word of God, as a part of the Christian's armour, is altogether vast and most essential. The sword of the Spirit is that which is given unto him for every purpose of actually assailing his enemies; and with this weapon alone the victory must be won, the enemy must be conquered. We must most unquestionably learn from this, that there is assigned to the word of God, more of actual or practical use than its literal knowledge can ever accomplish, however full or accurate that may be. And to suppose that such a knowledge of it, will serve our purposes in a true spiritual sense, to the prosecuting of advantage, gained over our spiritual enemies, is to proceed wholly on a most erroneous and deceiving theory. We can indeed, imagine many a case in which intimate acquaintance with the word of God, even in a literal sense, will do very much, and where it may be the means of working on the outward man a very manifest change, so similar to true godliness in its appearance,—that only the all-searching eye of God Himself, can perceive the difference between this change and a true and thorough change of heart. The cases we mean are, where the conscience is so awakened as to be impressed with the terrors of the law of God,—with a dread of sin, in its com-

ing punishment. We can suppose, and truly we have known, cases where sin was seen and felt in the mind to be deserving of a coming wrath; and where intimate acquaintance with the word of God literally, did habitually reprove it, and made the individual tremble in thus apprehending himself continually a sinner before God. And we have seen how, in such a state, the fear of punishment could make him turn away from actual sins, very many of them in the life and practice: and thus an exterior reformation might be easily seen in this individual's goings and conduct. He was held back from many sins:—he would turn almost with trembling from their commission; and he might thus go on for many a day, perhaps many a year, in all outward appearance of spiritual improvement, while the heart within might still cherish in all its oldness, the *love* of sin;—he might continue to lament that whatever others might do, he would not, and dared not sin with impunity: sin was embittered to his mind, but holiness in all this might not be endeared to his mind, —even the holiness of God, or any living desire to be in soul conformed to His holy image. Such is not assuredly the use of the word of God, which our text speaks of. In these cases, it was not the sword of the Spirit, but it wrought and operated as a yoke of bondage, it was, as if suspended over the soul, a written sentence of condemnation, or

as a messenger of wrath tormenting the soul before its time. We say that thus it must have been felt and experienced;—though we by no means would venture to say that such was the issue, or will be, to many an individual, who for a time may thus have been exercised. But the use of the word of God which is here spoken of, refers to the experience of the converted soul, where the Spirit of God has wrought that work of grace which brings the individual into the knowledge of God, into peace with God, into humility and repentance, and hatred of sin, into the exercise of true faith on God as He is manifested in Christ Jesus, gracious and merciful, able and willing, and faithful to save to the very uttermost, and where the view and hope of salvation come to be ruling and abiding principles in the mind;—it is *there* that the word of God acts as the sword of the Spirit, to assail and put to flight the principalities and powers of darkness.

But we must here, to the proper elucidation of our subject, direct your attention to a more extensive view of the term employed in our text, the word of God, than, perhaps, you have usually assigned to it. You cannot but be aware that this term, the word of God, is used in the scriptures repeatedly, especially in those of the New Testament, to denote Christ himself. It may appear rather startling to some minds, that we should advance the

position of its signifying Christ in the words of our text. Your objection will be grounded principally, if we mistake not, on the fact, that the word of God is here called the sword of the Spirit,—as if it were derogatory from the character or person of Christ, that *He* should be so termed. Now, so far as this objection goes, we would beg its entire dismission from your mind at once. It is a fearful error, prevailing, we apprehend in the minds even of many professing Christians, that privately they view the Spirit of God, or rather think and meditate concerning Him, as if He were a subordinate person of Deity,—as if the Father and the Son were superior in dignity to the third person of the Godhead. Such an idea, however prevalent it may be, is unsound, unscriptural, unbelieving, unspiritual. Among the persons of the Godhead there is no essential difference in dignity or glory. And while they are unitedly concerned in the gracious plan of salvation, humbling themselves to hold intercourse with the sinful and rebellious children of men;—and while the work of each one of them is *equally* essential to complete the salvation of the soul;—there is nothing inaccurate—nothing contrary to the revelation of God in His written recorded truth, to say that Christ Himself is the sword of the Spirit. We do not, observe, maintain that such is literally the import of our text. But

we will just direct your attention to a parallel passage of scripture, where the same doctrine, comparing it with that of our text, is most clearly set forth, Heb. iv. 12. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Here, manifestly by the word of God is meant Christ the Lord: who, while He is called the word, and compared to a two-edged sword, is spoken of at the same time in His personal character and attributes, in His omniscience and discernment, both discerning and judging all things, however secret, in the spirits and souls of men. And we cannot rightly understand the doctrine of our text, without our being made aware, that when the word of God is called the sword of the Spirit, it means the word as testifying of Christ, and making Christ clearly and manifestly known to the soul, as its only security and strength. The use of the sword spoken of in our text, is to put to flight, to wound, and conquer our spiritual enemies. Now, it is in Christ Himself that this power is inherent, both as God, and the mediator of the new cove-

nant. And when it is said that the word of God contributes to, or effects the end in view, it is most clearly announced to us, that Christ is Himself made known to the soul, by the Spirit, through the instrumentality of the word written, declared, and received; and that just in proportion as He is thus made known to you by the word, the enemies of the soul will be defeated of their deadly purposes against you. As we have already endeavoured to observe, it is unquestionably true, that the word of God, applied to the conscience, and understanding, without its immediately making Christ manifest to the soul, may make sin known to you; but making it known, is quite a different matter from overcoming it, and your obtaining the victory over it: having in some measure the knowledge of sin, is very different from truly disliking and hating it: until it be hated, it is not, and cannot be overcome; and our argument is, it is the argument of our text,—that without Christ being made known to your soul, you can neither hate sin truly, nor obtain deliverance from its power. Obtaining deliverance from it is the object of the true Christian warfare; it is the object set before the believer in the whole sum of our context and text; and the means for accomplishing this is, that Christ Himself who is the word, should be well and intimately known by you, habitually present unto you in

your contemplations and thoughts, in your understanding and heart; and in Him you will see what is the nature and demerit of sin. We mean, that you will see this revealed in His offices, in His work, and doctrines, and sufferings; and in Him you will behold with adoring and lively gratitude, the way devised, opened up, and perfected, through which you can obtain ultimate and complete deliverance. These spiritual and believing views of Christ, will attract the soul towards Him, in repentance, in godly sorrow for sin, in shame and hatred of it, in its having had dwelling and supremacy in the mind;—and they will do much more, instrumentally enabling the soul to apply to Him, with confidence, for grace and strength to overcome the wicked one:—and as certain it is, as the very faithfulness itself of God, that when the soul is thus taught, and made acquainted with Christ, enabled to come near unto Him, sin will be subdued, and the soul will obtain victory over it.

There is a distinction to be made between the written word, and that which is testified by means of it. The written word, or the record of Scripture, testifies of Christ. It speaks continually concerning Him, sets Him forth in all its declarations, as the sum and substance of the believer's hope of salvation. It is the office of the Spirit of God, according to the economy of grace,

in the eternal covenant and plan of redemption, to convey this record, the truths of the written word, to the soul, in spiritual demonstration and with power. Now, the end and issue of this work of the Spirit, is to make Christ known to the soul. This is the promise of Christ to His church on earth,—"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of *me*." These are the words of Christ. And again He says,—"Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify *me*, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Then, it is not the fact of the written word dwelling in us, or with us, or the fact of our understanding it literally, which will conduce to our spiritual advancement or benefit, of itself; but the more glorious and spiritual fact of the word in us serving a certain end,—it making known to us Him who is Himself the sum and substance of the word, and therefore, as one reason, called the Word; and thus we being made savingly acquainted with Him, and enabled to see in Him full power, and merit, and ability to save, that we be brought into the blessed and happy state of de-

pendance upon, and confidence in Him, for every spiritual blessing and privilege; and when this connexion is established with Christ, the soul will receive strength to wage an active warfare against sin, and to obtain an ascendency over it. It is then in all fulness and correctness of meaning true, that Christ Himself, the Word, becomes the sword of the Spirit, when, through means of the written record of Scripture, the Spirit manifests Him to the soul. And the soul has then, actually and in very deed, an interest in the person and power of Christ practically, to the conquering of sin, and of those temptations, allurements, and snares of the wicked one, by which sinners are caught and destroyed, because they regard not the testimony of the Spirit in the word, to make known unto them the character of God, as it is manifested in Jesus Christ.

But we must proceed farther upon this subject, endeavouring to set forth somewhat of the manner and way in which the word of God thus becomes the sword of the Spirit to the believer, in course of his spiritual warfare against sin and Satan. We must here lead your thoughts to consider the very establishment of the way and scheme of redemption. All of you, perhaps, are in word and profession sufficiently orthodox concerning the beginnings of sin in the world,—the manner of its entrance into the souls of mankind. The principalities, and powers, and rulers of

darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places, did obtain victory over our race. This is the great and melancholy fact, on the occurrence of which, the way of salvation was published and made known to lost and guilty sinners. These powers of darkness are stronger than we: and they spoiled us of all spiritual strength and power in the soul, in obtaining that victory over us. Now, in connexion and close alliance with these evil powers, all sin is, in the souls of each and every individual of Adam's fallen posterity: and therefore, nothing can obtain ascendency over sin, but a power stronger than that of its author. And had not He, who is above all—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, —had not He undertaken for His own people, to redeem them from the hand of the enemy, none could be saved,—sin would continue by the power of Satan to rule in each heart, and would eternally destroy the soul. But in Christ there dwells almighty, everlasting strength, the omnipotent power of God. He undertook in the covenant of grace to conquer the wicked one—all the principalities and powers of darkness; and to deliver souls from out of their deadly power. His undertaken work He accomplished in the fulness of time, and that, by humbling Himself, undertaking for sinners to appear in our very likeness and frame, and to encounter the adversary on the

ground of his conquest, in the likeness of our nature. Having finished His work of conquest and atonement for sin on earth, being made perfect through suffering, as the great Captain of salvation to every soul that is saved, He ever liveth to communicate of the same power to them. He is the source of all the grace they receive,—its procurer, its bestower. He ever liveth to make intercession for them, and to send forth unto them of His divine aid, that they too may be made conquerors. The grace and love, indeed, which devised the way of salvation, reigned from eternity in the Godhead, in all its glorious persons. It was exercised in the person of Christ, and He is the blessed fountain or source from which the blessings of grace descend to the souls of men. His life, and works, and death on earth, procured the extension and exercise of this grace to sinners; and His life and reign in heaven send forth its redeeming bounties to the soul of every sinner who is saved; all power in the economy of grace is delivered into His almighty and gracious hands; and with Christ, the Holy Spirit co-operates in the distribution, so to speak, in the applying of this grace to the souls of men. From the testimonies we have already adduced, it is manifest, that it is the office of the Spirit, in the economy of grace, to lead the soul into the knowledge of Christ, into the acquiring and exercise of true and

saving faith in His name. It is not our province here to inquire into the steps of this special work of the Spirit of God, but to mark the results of it, merely mentioning, that it is the word, the written word of God, of which the Spirit makes use, in bringing the soul to believe in Christ, to be united unto Him, and to derive spiritual life and strength from Him. The result or effect of this work of the Spirit, is, to bring before the mind, by demonstration, and spiritual understanding communicated, the character and attributes of God,—these are revealed most clearly, and made manifest, in Christ. He is in the Father, and the Father in Him,—they both are one. Now, when God's hatred of sin is made known to the soul, as manifested in Christ, in His doctrines, and doings, and sufferings, then are repentance and hatred of sin wrought in the believing soul, when it beholds Christ, who hates sin with an everlasting hatred, giving Himself a ransom for it. The soul becomes ashamed of sin, and seeks power to overcome and conquer it. And when the holiness of God, made manifest in Christ, is beheld by the soul, it produces reverence and godly fear; and a filial, submissive fear it is, when this holy God is beheld in Christ, still loving the sinner with an everlasting love. The goodness and love of God beheld in Gospel light, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, produces love to God in the soul. This goodness and love

are seen exhibited in Christ, and thus seen, while they produce love to Him, they also produce confidence *in* Him, and reliance upon Him in all His power and faithfulness to save to the uttermost. Now, in all this, the power of Christ is exercised—His life and power. It is in virtue of His power accomplishing the work of salvation—in virtue of His power as He now lives and reigns in heaven, that the Spirit of God has access to the souls of sinners, and works effectually there; for if sin had not by Christ been condemned and atoned for, God the Spirit could not dwell with those that were rebellious. It is by means of the word this power of Christ is conveyed to the soul, in the hand of the Spirit of truth. The power felt and experienced by the believer in the word of God, in his perceiving and feeling its truth, whether it testify of sin, or of righteousness, or of judgment, is the living power of Christ, bringing to that soul salvation and deliverance from the power of the adversary, which formerly ruled in the mind. The effect and result of the evil one's power, are, to exclude from the view, and feeling, and experience of the mind, the knowledge of God, and of His character, and attributes, and kingdom,—of every thing, in one word, that is spiritual and eternal, and divine. Those who are unbelieving, and disobedient to the calls and entreaties of Christ in the Gospel,

hear of these things with the hearing of the ear externally, but they lay them not to heart, they understand them not, they discern them not; and hence it is said, " If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." But the power of Christ as the Saviour and King, the living Head of His own redeemed church, is exercised, in this power of Satan being done away; and the soul is privileged to feel and experience this redeeming power, through the written word, when it manifests to the soul, Him of whom the word testifies.

Even in this view, the word becomes the sword of the Spirit, to defeat and to wound the power of our spiritual enemies. For when this happens, this enlightening of the soul in the knowledge of Christ and of His salvation, the soul is no longer in bondage, held by Satan's sway. It begins even then to experience deliverance, and the very nature of that deliverance is, that the soul seeks now to experience it more and more largely. To the believing mind, then, Christ, and the written word, are inseparable, and the latter becomes effectual to salvation, when by its means, the soul is enlightened and quickened. The written word, whether read, or preached, or heard, testifies of Christ, when it

is savingly sent. He comes to be regarded by the soul,—to be known by it; and when He is thus known, He is sought unto for additional communications of His power, that the individual may obtain victory over those spiritual enemies which he still experiences as dwelling with him, surrounding him on every side, and continually endangering his safety, seeking again to lead him astray from God, as manifested in Christ, and to disobey His government and authority. "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," implies, then, that in seeking conquest over your foes, you take the word that is written and declared, as the testimony concerning Christ, and that you receive *Him* as He is testified *of*, in that word, your strength, and your deliverer. Nothing else will avail to the awakened soul,—to the soul in any saving measure enlightened, as strength to overcome the wicked one,—to conquer sin in any one of its workings, but this view and knowledge of Christ being communicated to it through the word of truth. Whatever be your exercises with respect to the word of God, O, my friends, be it known to you, that unless it be habitually instrumental to you, in setting Christ before you, it will be to you a word of nought, with respect to the conquering of your spiritual enemies. "I am," says Christ, "the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet

shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." And well may we add, in addressing professing Christians around us, as Christ said to the individual then immediately spoken unto, "Believest thou this?" In Christ alone there is the living power, which, communicated to your soul, will enable you to overcome your spiritual foes,—and this power of His, you cannot receive, or be partakers of, but through His word testifying of Him to your mind and spirit within you—without His being made known to you through it; and it is when this happens, that you have indeed the sword of the Spirit in your hand to resist the enemies which assail you, and to put them to flight. Under the accusations of sin, which you feel indeed to be true, but with which Satan desires to estrange you from Christ, and from the hope of salvation, does not the blessed word of God set before you Christ crucified—the just for the unjust—and why? that your sins might be pardoned, and that He might bring you to God! But the word itself, the mere reading or hearing of this word will not suffice—the mere calling of it into memory in the hour of temptation and trial, of fears and dread, this will not silence the adversary's suggestions; but Christ Himself made known to you through this word, your mind laying hold of Him as it were, in His glorious person, in His everlasting

love, and merit, crucified for you, and your sins in Him for ever condemned, and God, with respect to them, for ever glorified. And in your fears, and doubts, and suspicions, that you have never yet experienced the grace of God in truth, that your soul till now lies under the power of spiritual death, and that you are the enemy of God, and under His condemnation, seek the sword of the Spirit, and take it, which is the word of God, making known with all clearness, that it was for such as you that Christ died, and not for His friends, for he had none on earth, among all the children of men. Behold *Him* who came to seek and to save you. Seek to His word as your authority for coming unto Himself, for casting yourself at His feet, where never sinner perished. And in complaints and fears of your deadness of soul, your insensibility and hardness of heart, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, making it manifest unto you, that it was to loosen your bonds and to set the captives free, that He came from Heaven; and now He reigns there as the glorified Mediator. The power is in *Him*, and not in you, which will break the stony heart and take it away from you. And under the burden of sin grievously distressing your soul in its hateful workings, in its fiery and strong temptations, in its alluring forms, seeking to betray your soul into the paths of disobedience;

O seek to the word of God—the sword of the Spirit, to make known to you its evil, and its true nature and consequences, as manifested in Christ, and by all his heavenly doctrines; and cleave unto Him who came to save His people *from* their sins, who hath conquered the enemy—all your spiritual foes, in your own very nature and form; who did this, not for Himself but for you, as your surety in covenant; and that He is now able and willing to impart unto you strength and power to make you victorious.

And in distresses, and fears, and perplexities, and losses, and wants in this life, and amid its burdening, overwhelming cares; your fears that you shall be forsaken of His providential kindness, and left to endure what your sins have more than deserved,—O look to His blessed word, wherein He declares the care that He exérciseth over you, and the promises which He gives of His unceasing faithfulness towards you. His blessed word will show you, that the earth is His and the fulness thereof, and that He reigneth over all, and can work mightily for you; that He only seeks you to honour Him by submission, and by filial trust, and that you should learn, (and do you not need to learn it?) the evil and the bitterness of sin, that you may flee from it to God to seek your happiness there. And in fear of the last enemy, death,—that you cannot then have as-

surance, or comfort, or peace; and how unprepared you are to meet that destroyer, in courage and hope,—look to the testimony of His grace, that he has overcome the last enemy for you, and that He liveth, thus to uphold and to strengthen you, and to perfect in your soul the work of your sanctification. In whatever circumstances you may feel yourself placed, here is your safety—the word of God,—Christ Himself therein revealed. And how ought you to bless and magnify His name, who hath opened the way for the Spirit to come and to dwell with you, making this word His sword, to the conquering of every enemy. How ought you continually to adore, and bless, and honour that Holy Spirit who is ever ready to come to you, and to apply the word to your soul in living demonstration and power. You honour Him not sufficiently, and you refuse to honour Him when you seek not His aid. You despise the glorious economy of the scheme of salvation, when you go forward in your own strength, as if the written word and you could manage matters between you, without the blessed and mighty aid of that Spirit who is the messenger of the everlasting covenant, and without whose aid, should you be able to meet sin and temptation with every most appropriate text in Scripture, you would only fail in the contest, and become the sport of your deadliest foes. How can I know, you will

say, when the Spirit makes the word of God His sword in my experience? To this we answer, when you feel your need of His teaching and power; and when under a sense of your need, you seek His guidance and light, for the Spirit is given to those that ask Him. And when the Spirit applies the word savingly, we have been seeking to show to you, that His work is known in all cases, by its blessed effects in the soul, leading you to Christ through means of the word, and establishing your hope and confidence for strength and victory, on Christ alone. And when this happens, we may safely appeal to all the people of God, whether they did not obtain victory according to their need, over the enemies which then assailed them. We would beseech those, strictly to examine themselves, who take confidence from the word alone, we mean the written word in itself, as if a literal remembering of it were to work as a charm, in giving them the victory over sin. It is not the remembering of it, it is not the striving to obtain growing acquaintance with it, that we would condemn, God forbid,—but the not receiving it as the means, and the not considering and feeling that it can only be profitable for growth in grace, just in proportion as it makes you acquainted with Christ, its substance, and sum, and end, as He is its author. The very lesson we would impress

upon you individually, from this precious text and doctrine, is, that you *would seek* increasing acquaintance with the word, as a means; that through it you might find the knowledge of Christ, by the Spirit applying it to your soul. "Search the Scriptures," says Christ;—but why? "because," says He, "they are they which testify of *me*." He gives you the word to set forth before you His own character, and the character of God manifested in Him, and the eternal glory to which he invites you,—the eternal misery to which sin seeks to allure you. Cleave to the word of God, then, with full purpose of heart, and view it as the medium of knowledge—the sword of the Spirit; seek the Spirit with it, for without Him it will not be a sword to you which you can wield with profit to your soul. It is not *your* sword, it must become the sword of the Spirit *in* you. It is unprofitable while you ask not His power to come with it. Still He waiteth to be gracious, and He is of God in Christ freely offered unto you all,—to each one in our hearing, while it is yet called to-day.

SERMON XI.

EPHES. vi. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

IN my now addressing you from these words, it becomes more your duty, to listen unto, and receive this precept, as standing in connexion with our preceding context, than to enter upon the consideration of prayer in general. We conceive, indeed, regarding the duty of prayer, in its general sense, that the urging of any objections against it, can be viewed in no other light than as bold and hardened impiety; the creature, in pride of heart, setting up his own reason in opposition to the revealed will and counsel of God; and despising and rejecting in ignorance, and in disobedience, one of the plainest and most urgent commandments of God, and one of the highest and most precious privileges conferred on the creature by a wise and merciful Creator. None can peruse the Scriptures, even superficially, without observ-

ing the frequency with which commandments and invitations to prayer are given in them, nor can they be perused without your observing the constant evidences which they afford of the most gracious answers being given to prayer, and how, through the instrumentality of this sacred and blessed means, the most precious benefits have come from heaven, to deliver, to rescue, to confirm, and to establish, in temporal and in spiritual benefits, the people of God, in every circumstance where His providence placed them, and in every generation and age of the world. To exclude prayer from the church of God, would be the same as to exclude the faculty of speech from the societies and communings of men on earth; nay, it were the same as if we were to make human beings like inanimate clods of the valley, by taking at once away from them, the gift of breath itself, and the elements of the atmosphere which physically sustain it; it were at once cutting off the medium of communication between earth and heaven; if not between God and man, at least between man and God. The efficacy of prayer as a means, is inscribed in legible characters, on the church, considered as the temple of God on earth—on all its pillars, on all its foundations and bulwarks and outworks, we behold the efficacy of prayer, one of its brightest ornaments, and one of the highest encouragements and invita-

tions to us, to enter and worship there. The grace, the duty of spiritual prayer, has the Spirit of God for its author, God as its object, and God in Christ as its answerer; and the eternal, inexhaustible treasures of grace in the eternal counsels of God, as the fund upon which it draws; and little wonder, then, that its effect has been stupendously signal and marvellous in the history and experience of His church. By prayer the doors of heaven have been opened and closed. "Elias," says the apostle James, "was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." By prayer the fiercest and proudest spirits of men have been tamed, and made subservient to the purposes of God, and to the good of His people—the wildest tribes of creation have been made tame, and harmless, and mild; fire has lost power to burn or destroy, and the floods of waters have stood suspended in their course. By prayer, the course of nature itself has been staid; the sun and the moon have stood still in the heavens, at its voice; and the church of God, though small and despised in number, has been made to appear, looking "forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with

banners." And as the word of God is the sword of the Spirit, so when this sword is wielded in prayer of the saints, it is a weapon of awful mightiness to confound the enemies of God; they fall as stubble before it, however mighty they be; and the faithful Christian, be his lot on earth ever so mean and despised, in his humble cottage of clay, in the secrecy of his lowly chamber, he brings down to his aid the power and strength of the Lord of hosts. He can say in humble, spiritual, but assured confidence of soul, when the spirit of prayer is poured forth graciously upon him: "Behold, God is mine helper, the Lord is with them that uphold my soul." And O, ye prayerless souls in our hearing, if such there be; were *your* minds once enlightened to behold the counsels and economy of God, in His dealings towards the children of men, you would see and acknowledge in trembling contrition of heart, while you despised and rejected this holy duty and privilege yourselves, and while you despised those who give themselves unto prayer,—that you owed instrumentally to their entreaties with God, the continuance of His long suffering towards you,—and of every comfort and earthly privilege which falls to your unthankful, unworthy lot; it is in answer to their prayers, that the judgments of God are restrained, that His anger has not been poured forth abundantly upon you; for were there no

people of His to pray to Him, on the earth, its own impieties would destroy it like Sodom, with fire from heaven. And ye people of God, remember, and think :—He has not been slow to hear, His ear is not become heavy towards you ; but you have been slow to ask from Him, and to put your confidence in Him ; and from this arises all your spiritual straits, and all your miseries. "Have I," says God, "been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, we will come no more unto thee?"—"My people have forgotten me, days without number."—"I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth ; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain : I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right."—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return ; that unto *me* every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength ; even to Him shall men come ; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

But to proceed, in explaining and enforcing the counsel of our text, we would now remark, that prayer, here, being put in connexion with

every other part of the whole armour of God which He has provided in Christ for our use; it is necessary for us, to know and feel in our own experience, how this connection obtains. We must seek this armour by prayer. Feeling our want of its special and individual parts, or of any *part* of it, our privilege is,—on the written, recorded authority of God Himself, that we have recourse to Him for it, in prayer. He invites and encourages us to ask it from Him. He makes known to us, its allotment for our use, in Jesus Christ, and His readiness and will to bestow it. The Christian's armour must be sought in prayer, it must be put on in prayer; and it must be used and wielded in prayer. Do you feel or experience an unbelieving heart, insensible by nature and practice, to the truth of the word of God, to the truth and value of the counsels which it gives, and the divine, eternal, and glorious objects which it reveals: you must seek unto God in prayer, that His Spirit might convey and apply His truths to your soul, that you might have your loins "girt about with truth;" that His Spirit might testify to your soul concerning Christ, and reveal Him unto you, that you might in beholding Him, have on "the breast-plate of righteousness." Do you feel oppressed with the burden of an earthly and carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject in practice to His law? You are called

upon to bring your case before God in prayer, that you may know God, and your calling of Him in Christ, and that you may have "your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;" and that you may stand as on an even place, having your soul reconciled to God, and walking at peace with Him. Do you experience your destitution or deficiency of faith, to overcome the wicked one, and his temptations and allurements and snares, and your own inability to resist them, or to quench his fiery darts? You must come in prayer to God, to receive from Him the shield of faith, "wherewith ye *shall* be *able* to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And while you experience deadness and insensibility of soul, regarding things spiritual and divine, which are your true portion; you must come by prayer unto God, that you may, by the strength of His Spirit, "put on," the helmet "of salvation;" and when you feel that your views concerning Christ, are but dark, and imperfect, and feeble, and that you realize not in your experience of soul, a living view of Him, as the sum and substance of the word of God; your supplications must be addressed to the gracious throne of His own majesty in the heavens, that you may in your realizing views of Christ, have the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Now, the words of our text convey to us the

assurance, that it is through the exercise of habitual and fervent prayer, that those graces mentioned, being received, or put on as armour, they can be kept in active use by the soul; and we come now to explain, by what particular exercise of the duty and privilege of prayer, this can be warrantably expected: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The injunction of praying always, is not to be understood in its strictly literal sense; there are other active duties in which we are also called to be habitually engaged, both in reference to time, and to eternity; for each of these, according to our lot and station, and place on earth, we have the authority and the commandment of God. But by praying always we are to understand this:—God points out to us in the Scriptures, prayer, as our duty, paramount and essential, among all others. He directs us to its habitual and regular cultivation and practice, as one of the means appointed by Him; yea, the special means of intercourse and communion with Himself as the God of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is *so* essential a duty, that time must, in very deed, be set apart for its regular and stated performance. This is implied, in the commanding of any duty; and especially in one so important as prayer. No duty, we all know, as rational

beings, can be well or at all discharged, without allotting time to it. And while this one is set before us, in all the counsel of God, as indeed a paramount duty, we are here called upon to have that respect to it, which would cause us to seize opportunity for it; and viewing as supremely important, those spiritual interests and realities to which prayer refers, that you should devote your time to it accordingly; and praying always, is, that that time should be regularly observed,—faithfully employed, diligently consecrated to its use;—that no other duties or pursuits should interfere with it to turn you away from its stated and habitual exercise;—that you should not omit or neglect it;—that you should not suffer the world and its interests to rob you of it, and to leave you even for a time strangers to God, and to the throne of His grace. The *regular* and *stated* exercise of prayer is, then, in one sense, praying always. Observe, my friends, that God in the wisdom of His providential government and arrangements, divides our time into stated portions, by the intervention, and regular succession of night and day, of evening and morning. He so orders our lot, that continuously, our very physical being, seems as if, for a time, suspended, in the hours of repose. And the enlightened and observant Christian, cannot but remark, that, every succeeding day of his life, his very being

and life are, as if restored to him anew from God. And when God maketh the outgoings of the evening and morning to rejoice over you, maintaining your lives, and securing to you your comforts, bestowing upon you health and strength of body, and soundness of mind, shielding you daily from danger, even in your bodily state and lot, and multiplying unto you your temporal benefits, O, does it not become you, even as His rational creatures, to acknowledge His care and His goodness; and of the time which He measures out to you, in continued and repeated succession,—is it not reasonable, that of that time, you should devote statedly a portion to His own service and glory?—Consider this, then, O prayerless soul; turn to God, and seek Him while He is yet to be found. But there is more than this. Your own necessities and wants loudly demand it, and for your own *good*, does God enjoin it upon you. He manifests Himself gracious and merciful,—willing to receive and to bless you, and beseeching you to come unto Him, that you may receive of his spiritual and everlasting bounties. He manifests unto you, if you will but listen to His voice addressing you,—that your soul is perishing,—that in its natural estate, it is already under the sentence of His righteous condemnation and wrath;—that it has unspeakable need to be endowed with grace from on high;—that this grace

is abundantly provided for you in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the guilty; and then, will you not devote even a small portion of the time He gives, to seek for your own eternal salvation and good? The time He bestows upon you is so arranged and dealt out to you, that it is calculated continually to remind you, of the period soon arriving when with respect to you, time shall be no longer; and then, will you harden your heart against God, and refuse to seek Him now, while the fleeting hour is continually on the wing, that must soon number you with the dead? And when those hours are closed, or when they even visibly draw to a close, how truly will it appear to you, that you might have, had you rendered obedience to the voice and invitations of God, employed, less or more, of every one of their number almost; to seek for the soul's eternal salvation! But we must remark more explicitly, that the devoting of a portion of time, each day, every evening and morning, to the duty of prayer, seems consonant with reason itself, and is confirmed to us by the authority and commandment of God. In the forms and ritual of worship which He prescribed to His church on earth, there was the institution of the morning and evening sacrifice and prayer, statedly and regularly to be observed. And shall we, under the Gospel, beneath the light of its glorious and full revelation, be less spiritual, less

diligent, less punctual worshippers at His gracious throne, than those who under the law, had only the benefit of types and shadows? God forbid. And on the Christian would we impress the necessity of his being found thus given, even to stated and punctual prayer; the consecrating of a portion of your time, to hold intercourse and communion with God. Let your nightly repose begin with coming unto Him, and pouring forth the desires of your soul before Him,—let each succeeding day that He bestows upon you, be at its beginning consecrated to the Lord,—let God be honoured by you, by His obtaining at least precedence of every worldly and temporal interest and call of duty or of business. As He is Himself the first and the last, O let Him be the first and the last with you! How otherwise can you presume to say unto Him, that He is your God, when other objects than He find a readier place in your soul and thoughts, and obtain the first ascendancy over you, each day and night of your life. Which of you feels not, that with respect to the world and its calls, each day there must be somewhat of plan in your business, and each evening somewhat of winding up in the matters which engross your pursuit and your care. And what is a man profited, should he gain the whole world, and lose his soul? and what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Let not, then, the world, and the prince of the world cheat you of your immortal soul's salvation. And it is grievous to reflect, upon the petty and paltry excuses which we too frequently hear urged, to defend the neglect of your praying always. Consider the time you occupy in mere and utter vain pursuit, and discourse, and frivolity. Precious moments and hours devoted to that which cannot either profit or satisfy; the much time devoted to keep well with the world, and its fashions which pass away, and to make respectable show with men; and the little time,—alas, the no time, which too many amongst us, ever think of devoting to God, and to the interests of an endless eternity! And let not the believer once deceive himself with the thought that the soul's affairs can prosper in this state. Think not, that thus you can either put on, or keep on, or exercise the armour of God, which in Christ He freely offers unto you. You must be up, and doing; for this is not your rest. You must keep your face steadily set for the heavenly Jerusalem. You must resist the power of a present evil world, and its necessities,—you must be found in this sense, ever following the injunction of our text, by praying always. But we would be doing indeed injustice to our high and sacred subject, did we represent this, as exhausting the meaning of the injunction in our text, of praying always. For by this we are to

understand, not alone the formal and stated duty of prayer; though that undoubtedly be implied in it. Praying always means, that we be of a praying or prayerful spirit habitually. Prayer in its very nature, is not like many other duties, dependent on time and place, and outward form. It is an exercise suited to the mind; an exercise to which, in the nature of things, there can never be any insurmountable hindrance, whatever the external circumstances be, whatever our avocations be, so long as the exercise of a rational mind is bestowed upon us, in the good providence of God. The mind *may* hold intercourse with God in prayer, amidst the busiest avocations of life. Its powers are quick and vivid, in themselves—the exercise of mind is constant, unceasing;—whatever be the bodily engagement, or the external circumstances of your lot. And praying always implies, that such a knowledge and recollection of God, be sustained in your mind habitually, that to Him, you will turn, and appeal unto Him for His spiritual blessings and aid; it signifies, that you continually, or habitually be found bearing about with you, the feeling of your own spiritual state and wants in the presence of God: and that you have in your wonted habits, the provisions of His grace in Christ so distinctly before you, and the end of your calling in Him,—that all these shall habitually form to you

subject of intercourse with, and prayer to God. It implies, that the affairs of the soul and its salvation be habitually impressed on you; just as those of this world and its pleasures and cares are habitually uppermost with those who care only for *them*. And when such a mind is given, then will prayer be habitual: when need of grace is experienced, according to the circumstances or duty, or trial, in which we are, grace will be sought in prayer to sustain and uphold you. This is praying always. And we fear, in this sense, that many do forsake the duty, and the exercise of it. They would care for salvation, but they cannot bear to make it the one thing needful. They would yield to us in our arguments for stated prayer, but they will turn away from us in our injunctions of habitual prayer, and of a praying mind. You will yield, perhaps, one way or other a prayer, but you would firmly oppose a praying *always*, because other objects than God and salvation maintain the ascendency in your heart. Now, this will not do: God will be glorified in all His true worshippers. He will have the place due to Him in the heart, which is the supreme place of reverence and regard. And the very grace you need to receive from Him is, that He would thus come to reign within you; and that the excellency and value of that salvation which His Gospel reveals and offers, should become to you

the most precious object of all in your very experience. And while you have not yet been brought to this state of character and mind, the more need have you to pray, even to pray without ceasing, that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, should shine into your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: that you should feel truly, impressively, and practically, and habitually, the truth of the word and counsels of God,—the reality of spiritual objects, your own personal interest in them, as perishing immortal souls: and when this light comes, then assuredly you would make no defences against habitual prayer,—against that silent but earnest exercise of mind, in which the true Christian, because he believes, is found habitually exercised in intercourse with God, and the things which are above. O! pray now, that you may be brought to this blessed state of light and knowledge, and feeling; for it concerns intimately and eternally the salvation of your soul. And let those who have even begun to pray, under any concern for salvation, learn, that they have need truly to be built up by the blessed Spirit of God into this habitual exercise and frame. And as He deals with the soul within, see that you quench not His workings and counsel. He is the Spirit of prayer; and when He brings to your conscience and heart, thoughts of

God, through His word and His providence, when He impresses upon you thoughts and perceptions, and feelings regarding your spiritual state, O! see that you reject not His teaching and guidance, but let the voice of your secret aspirations be directed to heaven, and your Father who seeth in secret shall reward you openly, not for your prayer, but for the sake of Christ, through the instrumentality of your prayer, even of your silent prayer,—He will send unto you even openly and clearly, in the light of your own happy and comforted experience, full evidence, that He does regard your state, and that none of your wants or cares, or fears, is unknown by Him, but that He, unceasingly, as the Keeper of Israel, watcheth over you.

But this leads us, in the next place, to speak of the manner and kind of prayer which is here spoken of. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." The view in which we feel warranted, according to scripture, to consider the word "supplication" here, annexed to, or joined with prayer, is, to enforce and heighten by the one the significancy of the other, —to impress upon us the sincerity and the earnestness of true believing prayer:—to show us, that instead of being formal, it is the putting forth of the earnest and ardent desires of the soul before God,—an intreating and wrestling with God, as

it has been emphatically and justly called. Prayer and supplication, when thus joined together, make manifest, that the soul must be truly in earnest, in presenting its petitions at a throne of grace. The word, supplication, literally, represents to us the individual who prays, as in a suppliant and earnestly beseeching attitude of soul: looking earnestly unto God,—waiting anxiously upon God,—and expecting to receive from Him, the answer of which the soul stands in need. The words themselves, indeed, convey more of emphatic description than any comment upon them can well convey. "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*" O! how does this condemn the dead and listless formalist in prayer, —the utterer of words, which coldly flow from the lips, while the heart is far astray, and all the desires and imaginations wandering on the mountains of vanity. These words teach us, that the formal prayer is not a Christian exercise in truth; it is but the shadow, and not the substance of prayer. It does not reach unto God, except as it testifies against the soul, that it is dead in trespasses and in sins; and that it does not honour God in thus drawing near unto Him with the lips, while the heart is far removed from Him. It will not suffice, my friends, that you thus seek to satisfy yourselves, and to satisfy God,—it will but condemn us in His sight, if by the form, we

confess that we ought to pray to Him indeed, while we willingly allow the heart to be bound to its idols and vanities. You will seek to maintain, that you do not willingly allow this. Why, if you did not, your prayers would be earnest, and with all supplication, to God, that He would be pleased to quicken you,—that He would remove from your soul the bonds of earthliness, and of vanity which attach you to earth, and render you an alien to God in your mind, the very absence of such a prayer, the very insensibility that lies upon you respecting its necessity and its use, are evidences enough to show, that it is willingly you consent to the law of sin in your mind, and that you permit the objects of time and sense to have ascendancy and dominion over you. When you set and bestir yourselves to any actual matter of business, of which you feel the importance and value, and concerning which, you are well aware, that *now* is the time, to urge and ply means to secure it, it will not be with indifference or with unconcern that you will attempt it,—it will be with anxious care, with an awakened and active mind, keenly alive to the object in view, and carefully watching each movement and step of your progress, till the issue begin to announce success and prosperity to your cause. Prayer, then, is the doing of business with God, when the very reverence due to His great adorable name,—to His omnis-

cient presence, should surely awaken and rouse the mind into carefulness and solemn thought; and where the eternal interests of the soul, now at stake, should awaken every purpose, and every energy of your spirit within you,—to be up and doing, in pleading with Him. And when once spiritual feeling and knowledge are implanted in the mind, all this *will* happen, to a sensible degree, and the soul can no longer remain inactive: the form, or words of form, learned or repeated by rote, will then be thrown aside as armour that suits not your state and condition. Some may complain of the want of gift and ability wherewith to pray; but the feeling and sensible soul will not want for thoughts and ideas when pleading with God in prayer: far less will any sense of deficiency in those respects withhold you from the duty,—the cause is important,—the dangers impending over you are great and many, the urgencies of your case will arouse your soul to call upon God, should it even be, as often indeed it is, in groanings that cannot be uttered. Nor will the avocations of the world withhold you from it, nor shut against you your closet's door. You will *take* time to the work,—you will find opportunity for the sacred and needful exercise: and in bitterness of soul though you may be, and fearful as may often seem to your own spirit, the reflections impressed upon it; yet will the believer

have to confess, that after all, however unpromising to himself his case may seem, the seasons devoted to prayer are the best and most profitable hours of his life,—the wisest and most beneficially bestowed. In believing and spiritual prayer, the understanding is closely occupied in considering the realities of the individual's condition with God, and in beholding the call and invitations of the Gospel of Christ; and, in contemplating the great and wondrous realities of Christ's person, and doings, and sufferings, and death,—the glory and excellency of His offices, in His exalted state now, at the right hand of the majesty of God in the heavens,—as intimated in the sacred counsels of truth. The affections and desires are engaged in seeking for those blessings, of which the soul feels itself to be utterly destitute by nature,—the desires are drawn forth after their attainment, and mingled with hope, of their being bestowed, according to the riches and bounty of sovereign grace. The heart is wholly engaged in seeking to give glory to God,—to be delivered from sin,—and from its ruling power; and to be conformed to the will and image of God, who calleth the believer into newness of life. In all this, there are ample materials indeed for consideration, and for actual anxious business with God. And, my friends, if your hearts condemn you, that such are not your prayers hitherto; that they have been but formal

and cold, and dead; you have need to seek unto God in earnest prayer even now, and henceforth that His Spirit should be sent to quicken and rouse your soul, to make known to you your actual state with God; to impress truly upon you the preciousness of the offers now made to you, and the preciousness of the opportunities and means which God in His merciful providence still is bestowing upon you.

And we must here remark, that praying in the Spirit signifies specially two things, which in amount may be called one, for they come to form but one in the believer's actual experience. It signifies first, that the spirit or mind within you be engaged truly in the exercise of which we speak, and in the manner to which we have already alluded,—that the whole of the intellectual being, in one word, which is the spirit of man, be occupied in the actual business of prayer with God. But it also signifies that the Spirit of God is Himself the author of prayer, and that He awakens and stirs up the soul to its exercise,—that He it is who gives the feelings, the views, and the desires which do set us to pray, revealing to us the state and condition of the soul, and presenting and applying to the conscience and heart that view of the character and glory of God in Jesus Christ, which encourages the soul to the exercise of this duty in truth. Now this Spirit is offered

unto each one of you, and God assures you, that asking you shall receive it, and when He comes, it will ever be as a Spirit of prayer, urging and quickening your soul to the exercise of the duty, and making the mind to see it as a special and precious privilege. And it is the evidence of this Spirit being given, the evidence that He doth, at least, in some measure, quicken and rouse the soul, when the mind is thus seriously and devoutly engaged in this duty. You pray in the Spirit, there is hope that you do, when thus your own spirit is actually employed in it, when it seeks the exercise, not as a task, an unwelcome business which you must somehow strive to get over, but as that on which the highest interests of your eternal destiny, and of your present advantage, are most truly suspended, as it regards your part of the solemn matter. We must then seek the guidance and aid and power of the Spirit of God, who in the eternal covenant pledges Himself to teach the souls of sinners, undeserving and guilty as they are, and to lead them to God as the God of their salvation in Jesus Christ. There are some who admire the beauty and appropriate language of certain prayers, even prayers set before them in form. We deny not but there may be truly appropriateness and beauty in them, and as compositions they may be the fruits of true spiritual discernment and feeling in those who

laid them before you. But what avails this if you have not yourselves the spirit of prayer abiding with you, and working effectually in your own soul. If it be the beauty of the formal prayer which awakens your mind, that is but a vague and surface sentiment which you must be conscious to yourselves speedily passes away; and however much that fleeting sentiment may occupy you for the time, what does it profit the soul? The soul falls back into its former deadness and earthliness, and it remains as careless of spiritual objects as before. Such a state is wretched and dangerous. It is a cruel deceiving of the soul, leading it astray from God, and from the knowledge and obedience of Him. It is not surely a praying always, nor is it a praying with all prayer and supplication. The mind itself must be awakened and roused by the Author of prayer, and you must seek the Spirit from Him to awake and to guide you.

In neglect of this sacred duty, there is evidence of spiritual death in the soul. At all times and seasons there is access offered to the throne of grace. God is not far off from any one of us. He invites us to draw near, and to make all our wants and our supplications known to Him. Praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, is to avail ourselves of these gracious invitations and offers, and to come to God according to the word

and warrant of His own appointment. And those do honour Him most, who do most earnestly and assiduously, and habitually, wait upon Him, even in praying always. In all the history of the church of God which the Scriptures reveal to us, whether as individuals or communities of His people, we see clearly, that when God was known of them, they became prayerful, and earnest in prayer, and we see also recorded, that a Spirit of prayer and of supplication preceded the doing of signal good unto them on the part of God. They sought unto Him, and He heard them; they waited upon Him, and His deliverance was vouchsafed—He suffered them not to be put to shame. And we see, that however long God might, in His own infinite wisdom, see fit to deny their suit, the time appointed of Him to give deliverance and aid, was the best, and that it proved to be so, even in their own happy experience. And however unlikely a favourable issue might be to them, *that* did not hinder His powerful working, nor did it prevent their full deliverance in due season. The experience of God's people in every age has been, "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel

of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the Lord, ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

From what has now been advanced on this subject in your hearing, we would call upon you individually to see and try respecting yourselves, how far the injunction of our text is regarded and practised by you; or rather may we not say, how much it has been disregarded and not practised by you. It is a fearful confession,—We cannot pray. It is not a true declaration. Can you not *try* to pray, addressing your soul to God? Cannot you seek from Him, who promises to bestow it, the Spirit of prayer, the will and the ability to pray? This, this is your loss and your guiltiness, that you will not come and submit yourself to the Lord according to His gracious and merciful invitations. This is what God will require at your hand when He summons your soul into judgment. He had set His invitation before you. He had given you His promises, His encouragements, and the assurance that your prayers should be heard, and you disobeyed His voice. Obey it now and you will experience

His own saving strength, communicating life and energy to your soul and mind in prayer. O my friends, can we but mourn and weep to see sinners invited to come to God, and they rebelliously refusing and slighting all His invitations of mercy. How can we but mourn, in anticipating the dread realities to you of a judgment-seat, when the books shall be opened, and every invitation which God gave, and which you refused, spread forth in condemning array before you, seeing you cannot answer for one of a thousand when this account rises in judgment against you. The time is speedily drawing on; soon to each one of you in our hearing,—it will be no matter of speculation or theory. You will be ushered into the very midst of those realities which now this world with its evil ascendancy over you conceals from your view. Seek now unto God, that He may remove your spiritual darkness of mind, that He may quicken your soul to apprehend the things which belong to your peace. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And you who seek and endeavour to wait upon God in prayer, rest not upon your own ability or strength for the duty. Cast yourselves in it upon the guidance and aid of the Spirit of God. Strive against your inability and your unwillingness to pray, for the evil disobedient mind is still

present with you in its remaining influence. Where conscious of that influence, let your cry ascend unto God, for His strength to be made perfect in your weakness, for His grace to be sufficient for you. The voice of your prayer He will not despise. He will send unto you help from above, and He will encourage your hearts; and every succeeding day, if you persevere in waiting upon Him, will give you additional experience, that He graciously careth for you.

SERMON XII.

EPHESIANS vi. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

IN addressing you from these words on a former occasion, our remarks were principally directed to the elucidating of the counsel given in the first part of our text,—that of praying always; with observations on the duty and privilege of prayer in general. But it may very easily be seen by a mere perusal of the words of our text, that the inspired writer dwells with special emphasis, solemnity, and earnestness upon this duty of prayer, as forming an essential and most important and urgent part of the Christian's business on earth. The mere perusal of the words may indeed present an aspect of plain and solemn reproof, if not of condemnation, to those, whoever they be, and of whatever external profession, who confine their exercise of this duty to formal and

periodical or stated prayers. We cannot see how any such persons can conclude themselves to be among the number who have been effectually awakened unto righteousness, and who are running with patience the race set before them, or who are strenuously and perseveringly engaged in fighting the fight of faith, or warring against their spiritual enemies, as good soldiers of Christ. The voice of reason may be abundantly decisive on this point: for whatsoever we find and feel to be truly important to us, it will unavoidably follow, that we are anxious and earnest, and diligent in pursuing it. To view this merely in a speculative or theoretical light as a matter of duty, and to be dragged, as it were, into the exercise of prayer under the authority and influence of such a view, contrary to inclination, and without any active or real desires, is a sign not of spiritual life in the soul, but of spiritual death; and that, however regularly or pointedly, in form and habit, the duty may be performed. We would not indeed presume to say, but the true Christian may frequently feel the dispositions and leanings of the old nature so prevalent with him, as to make the duty of prayer less grateful and acceptable to his soul at some seasons than at others, and to give him less of enjoyment and true feeling in its exercise. But such are the seasons at which the enemies of his soul prevail

against him; and he is then in danger of stumbling and falling, and of being overcome by their wiles. But we can scarcely think, even at such seasons, that the true believer will desist or cease from the duty itself. The principles of the spiritual life, if not totally overcome in the soul, will still prompt and guide the believer to the duty and privilege of prayer to God. The faithful soldier, in temporal warfare, when the calls of duty come to him, may be frequently so situated that his bodily feelings may render them in a great measure unwelcome; he may be at the time weak and fatigued by the duties already performed: his frame may be wearied, hunger and thirst may be assailing him; or sleep may be overcoming him; or a known deficiency in his armour and findings may cause him to have lively apprehensions for his personal safety; but still, should all these press upon him at once and sorely,—when the signal is made, or when the alarm is sounded that the enemy is approaching, that soldier would forfeit every title to character and courage, were he to yield to all these disadvantages, and not go forth to meet and face the approaching dangers. And so, in the spiritual warfare, it is not by yielding to opposing difficulties that the soul's interests can prosper: it is by living ever ready, at the call of God, to be up and doing; and with regard to prayer, the Christian has the call of

God before him in the words of our text. And did the believer indeed know and rightly appreciate the circumstances of his spiritual lot, he would not fail to observe, that it is when he is already under the power of some besetting sin, whatever it be, and however smooth in its workings, that the duty of prayer becomes distasteful unto him; and the primary duty in such a case is, to inquire and to find what this sin may be: and even for this, there is need of earnest prayer unto God, that His Spirit might come and preside over the search and inquiry; and with His blessed counsel and light, so guide the mind, that this enemy might be detected and exposed to the soul's full and actual recognition; and when discovered, it is then the business of the believer to pray for strength to conquer it. The nominal Christian or the formal professor may laugh to scorn the minuteness and urgency of the personal business into which the believer is called in spiritual things; but those who have found the plagues of their own heart, the depth and deceitfulness of sin in its workings there,—the difficulty of knowing it, and the danger of not knowing it, they cannot but feel, that without the privilege and exercise of prayer their soul would soon be won, humanly speaking, and conquered by the enemy's power. It was an eminent saying of a man of God, that he never yet was enabled to

conquer a spiritual enemy but on his knees, in the exercise and attitude of prayer. And we are told by the hearer and the answerer of prayer Himself, that it was "when men slept". the enemy came and sowed tares in the field. And if those sins which seek to withhold you from prayer be permitted by you to succeed in doing it, you will soon experience that they are tares which will speedily grow, and produce the fruits of disobedience to God in every other part and path of your duty also. The effort of the principalities and powers against which you have to contend, is first to draw you away from communion with God in prayer: let them succeed in this, and they will soon succeed in more: they will render you strangers to God in other duties and privileges, nay, they will speedily render you strangers to the very duties themselves. Let the Christian therefore remember continually, that the enemies of the soul are to be conquered in prayer; that all the parts of the Christian armour spoken of in our preceding context, are to be wielded in prayer; and that the earnest exhortation of our text is therefore founded upon the actual necessities of your spiritual condition. The cry will soon come to you, whether it shall find you prepared or unprepared, to go forth and meet your Lord; but the call now continually comes to you, to go forth and to meet your enemies in the Christian

warfare; and we must repeat the truth, and we seek to enforce it upon your soul, that it is in prayer you can meet them; and that it is in prayer you will obtain strength from above, to overcome and to put them to flight. Prayer has well been called the breathing of the spiritual life: surely when the exercise of respiration and breathing is impeded, and becomes a burden, some special disease may be well apprehended;—which of you, then, as natural beings, would not seek for advice and for aid. O! then, when prayer is impeded, seek to the Physician of souls, and you must seek unto Him in the exercise of prayer itself, as the way which He has already prescribed, and clearly set before you.

But we must proceed to consider the expression praying "in the Spirit." This may be said, as stated already, to bear a two-fold signification; or rather, that its true signification consists of two parts, both of them important, as forming a whole. In the first place, we may understand the expression of praying in the Spirit, as indicating actual and real exercise of the whole mind or inner man, in this solemn duty: that the whole spirit or mind of the worshipper must be really engaged in it. It is not praying merely in words that will suffice,—it is not the exercise of any one separate faculty of the mind that is required in it, such as the memory or understanding, or even the judgment;

nay, the conscience of the one who prays may be bearing witness to the need he has of the blessings for which he supplicates; and still the prayer may not be either a believing or a spiritual duty yet. But when the Spirit of God excites effectually to prayer, the will, the desires, the whole affections are exercised with the other powers of the mind, in earnestly desiring the objects for which prayer is made: the whole of the inner man, the whole spirit of man, is exercised in prayer, when it is spiritually performed. That the believer will have to experience and to lament short-comings, and sad and numerous acts of mind in the performance of this duty, in which he feels that sin has mingled,—perhaps prevailed, is unquestionable, while he is not yet set free from the body of sin and death: but yet over these the renewed will prevails in the believing mind. The renewed affections are steadily set towards God, and the things which are spiritual and eternal. There is a being of grace in the soul, with every one truly awakened and converted, and this pervades every faculty, though it may not yet have obtained the full and habitual ascendancy in every faculty; but in praying in the Spirit, it is undoubtedly meant, that the whole of the inner man, actuated by the new law of spiritual life, is to be actually engaged. It will be engaged, even in the prosecution of prayer, in

striving against its inward enemies, against those imaginations and thoughts which would turn away the Spirit within you—your mind from holding intercourse with God, and with spiritual objects. And it is because there are such enemies and obstacles by nature residing within, that the duty of prayer must be with earnestness and supplication in the Spirit. For if those enemies be permitted to overcome, in the exercise of prayer, it is turned thereby into a service of nought, at least so far as respects your experience in it. You cannot but feel, that you are drawn away from God,—by the power of evil: you must therefore strive in this solemn duty, that sin do not obtain dominion over you: and for this you must take your encouragement in prayer from God Himself, —undertaking it, not in your own strength, or in your own mental resources, depending upon them; but looking to the grace which is in Christ Jesus, to the way of communication which is opened up in the eternal covenant of grace,—to that blessed and gracious Spirit who is ever ready to teach and to guide you, and to whom in the merits and intercession of Christ, there is a way made, to come indeed to the soul, and to dwell there, as a Spirit of grace and of supplications. And the Christian will find, that going onward thus, in the path of duty, laying hold on the authority and commandment, and invitations of God, as his war-

rant to pray,—when he feels his need of the blessings which are implored from Heaven, laying hold of the testimony of the Gospel concerning Christ, and God manifested in Him, as his encouragement to seek the blessings,—laying hold of the promises of God, which he hath given in the Gospel regarding the bestowal of those blessings, and striving to lay hold by faith upon Christ, as the intercessor with God, and the procurer and bestower of the blessings,—the believing Christian will find, that of all ordinary privileges, prayer is the most precious in itself, among every instituted means, next to the word of God being given him as a rule and authority, and warrant: and the benefits resulting to the Christian, through prayer, as a means, cannot fail to be vividly and gratefully experienced by the soul.

But, in the second place, praying in the Spirit, signifies, that true believing prayer is the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God in the soul: it signifies, that true prayer is made under the influence and authority of the Spirit's efficacious working. We are aware, that this view of the subject, though deeply important, both doctrinally and in practice, is exposed to a material, or at least a seemingly formidable objection. If true prayer must be the fruit of the Spirit's work in the soul, it may be asked, whether indeed we ought to pray, until we are sensible, or until we experience, that the Spirit

of God is really making intercession in us, and that we are under His influence and His guidance. It cannot be unknown to many among us, that there is a pretty numerous class of professing Christians who seem to entertain this view of the subject; and who profess to experience sensibly in their own minds the Spirit's movements, and that this alone warrants them to engage in prayer, as well as in certain other duties of the Christian life. But such a view concerning Christian duty, we are fully warranted to represent, and you to believe, as contrary in itself to the tenor and spirit of the Christian scheme, as set down in the Gospel. The Gospel, let us remember, is ordained, published, and provided for sinners; to sinners it is proclaimed; and nothing in all its announcements can be more clear, than the invitations which it gives to you as sinners, not as righteous, to draw near to God, imploring His grace and favour in Christ. The law of God shows you that you are sinners. The Gospel of Christ invites you, feeling yourselves to be sinners, to wait upon God for grace,—to convert and to sanctify your soul. It promises grace, converting grace, sanctifying grace, to those who come as sinners unto God—as sinners in their own personal and heartfelt experience. Its great and leading invitation is, to believe in the offers made, to strive to believe, and feeling that you

do not naturally believe, in truth, to ask the grace of faith from God, through Jesus Christ, who purchased that and every other benefit for the sinful children of men. It is not the feeling, therefore, that you have already received grace, that is to form your warrant or authority for drawing near to God, and for beseeching His favour; but it is the full and abundant evidence given you in the Gospel, that there is grace with God, to be given unto you—that he offers and promises to bestow it, and that he commands and invites you to seek it from Him. This is clearly the path of duty; it is clearly exemplified in every instance recorded in the Gospel history, of those who came unto Christ, and who were blest by Him with His benefits. You are not, therefore, to wait until you sensibly experience what you can conclude to be the work of the Spirit in the soul. You are to come as you now are: there is no such thing as delay spoken of, permitted, or at all enjoined in the word of God. You must come believing, striving to believe, that the grace promised shall assuredly be given; and could you put up no other petition, even in very words, but the publican's prayer, do you not see in the Gospel how that prayer had its answer given it. Surely he felt not, in coming to pray, that he was already justified, when he could not so much as raise his eyes to heaven. Surely he

felt not as if the Spirit of God were already bestowed upon him; but yet he proceeded to pray, and his prayer was heard and graciously answered, though of its answer either, he might himself have had no sensible experience at the time; when he went down to his house justified, he might still be found considering himself but a wretched and perishing sinner. We do not say but every true prayer is the work and fruit of the Spirit: we maintain that it is; but we say that you have no authority to desist from prayer, till you have settled that point. God gives you no such commandment; but he gives you the promise, that asking you shall receive, that seeking you shall find, that knocking the door shall be opened unto you. While we urge this doctrine and practice as needful, and the only path of duty, we have also to urge upon you the necessity of examining yourselves, and proving your own selves, and to see whether you be in the faith, and to see whether your prayers do bear the marks of their being in the Spirit, and the fruit of His work in the soul. How is this to be learned? How are we to prove it on Scripture ground? It is on that ground alone that the matter is to be tried and decided, else we err. Now this is to be proven by your consulting the Scriptures themselves, and by your seeing the character and descriptions of prayer, which you

there see offered by those in whom the Spirit of God wrought effectually. You will there find none of the saints indifferent or cold in prayer; their prayers bear no such marks. Do you not see that they were even earnest, and urgent, and anxious! Witness the publican's prayer itself, short as it was. Was he indifferent about the mercy of God, whether he should receive it or not? He felt that his eternal lot depended upon this; and he evidently felt a need of that mercy, which was past all utterance, in its magnitude and its urgency. The first sign or evidence, then, we would offer, of prayer being in the Spirit, is, that the mind is awakened and roused to feel its need of that which is prayed for. We say not, that this of itself, is evidence sufficient. But in the next place, the work of the Spirit being, in part, to convince of sin, the prayer that is taught of Him, must be accompanied by a deep and lively feeling of sin, and unworthiness in the soul. Unworthiness, you will ask; what unworthiness do we mean! We would point your attention again to the publican's prayer, and you will see in his case exemplified, the sense of unworthiness we speak of; and you will see it in the wretched prodigal's accents of shame and penitence, when he addresses his offended but compassionate father—"I am no more worthy to be called thy son;" and why? "I have sinned against Heav-

en, and in thy sight." O, how unworthy is the estimate, and how widely wrong, which the men of the world make of godliness or religion, when they fancy its exercise to consist of exaggerated feelings, and enthusiastic delusions. The whole consists in *matters of fact*, and instead of this conviction of sin being an exaggerated feeling, however deep and acute the pain, it is but a revelation to the soul of a matter of fact,—the Spirit of God disclosing to it its own real character with God, in its natural and sinful condition. But again, praying in the Spirit, we must conclude from Scripture testimony, implies, not merely a confused and unaccountable sense of guilt and of danger, but a lively impression, a solemn view of the character of God, presented unto the mind. The degrees of clearness with which this comes, may vary in different cases, but it is given and felt in such measure, that the mind perceives of His majesty, and glory, His holiness and power, and the soul is made contrite before Him, while it feels its unworthiness of His favour. The soul, taught by the Spirit of God to pray to Him, beholds God, and directs its supplications unto Him. And we would in the next place, on this part of our subject, observe, that the spirit of prayer leads the mind to the word of God, as its rule of judging concerning its own spiritual and actual condition. It is not what man says or

judges regarding it, which the individual now considers, but what God in His word of truth declares. Here the truly praying soul is constrained to take its stand, and feels the authority of that word coming home to it with demonstration and power—making out a case, so to speak, which the mind now feels to be truly its own, and which it can no longer either deny, or view with any thing like indifference. It views the matter now with solemnity and with awe. And we would, next to this, observe, that when once the mind is brought to feel from the word of God, its own actual condition, and its need truly of prayer, it also feels from the same word, and under the same heavenly and holy guidance, the ground of encouragement given there for prayer to God. The spirit of prayer lays hold of this authority and warrant, and is exercised in seeking from God the blessings which the Gospel of Christ unfolds, as ready to be bestowed upon it. And, finally, we would remark on this head, that when prayer is in the Spirit, it cannot but be exercised in looking to the way of acceptance with God, which his word so clearly and so graciously unfolds. It looks to, and it contemplates Christ as that way of acceptance. It cannot lean, as it were, upon itself, for success, or for answer, or peace; but it dwells by mental exercise and contemplation, and earnestness, on the person, and

character, and finished work of a crucified and exalted Saviour, as its ground of expectation, and its door of hope: yea, ere yet that hope comes to be truly prevalent in the mind, ere yet it well can say, that to it the door *has been* opened, it looks to Christ *as that door*. Now, there is in all this, a sufficiency of subject to exercise the whole soul in prayer; and if we add to this, as truly well we may, the feelings of personal weakness, and the feeling of danger from the number and strength of spiritual enemies to its own salvation, by which every praying soul beholds now that it is surrounded on each side, and at every moment, we may easily think, that the exercise of prayer to God must be, to those who are taught of the Spirit to pray, a business of earnestness, and of carefulness. And if your prayers, my friends, be they ever so punctual, and be they serious and solemn in form and in manner, yet if they be not the very business of your souls, the urgent pressing business thus, of your souls with God, they do not bear upon them the marks of their being yet in the Spirit. We know how much the adversary of souls will seek to persuade you,—if, indeed, you have been awakened and roused to call upon God—that your prayers are not right, that you must be but asking amiss, when you have not the sensible experience vouchsafed to you that they are ever yet heard or answered

of God. But you are entitled to answer to every doubt, and fear, and evil suggestion which may come to you, that God commands and invites you to pray to Him; and that the grace and power are with Himself to *teach* you aright, and to guide your souls in this path of duty, in this exercise of soul, unto which the words of our text exhort you. His promise is, that He will pour forth upon sinners, upon those who were disobedient, and guilty, and careless before, the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and let none who seek salvation from God by prayer, under a sense of their need, and under a view and earnest looking to the testimony of His grace in Christ Jesus, ever despair of their prayers being heard and answered. But above all, let not those evil suggestions withhold you from the duty enjoined in the text. One thing you know, or at least you are called upon to know, is, that prayer is the means appointed;—that desisting from it is a very act of rebellion against the express commandment and invitation of a gracious God,—and that while the issues are His, the duty is yours; and that you dispute His sovereignty, His eternal right to do as seems good in His sight, when you would, as if, presume to set yourself to treat with God on your own terms, and not on His; and do you not do so, when you reason with yourself, saying, that you will pray if He answer you, but

if you feel He answers you not, that you will turn away from Him, and not continue even to honour Him by living a suppliant at His throne. And with the words of our text before us, though there were none else conveying the same doctrine or precept in the whole compass of Scripture, may you not assure yourselves, and bear it on your heart in your practice, that whatsoever withholds you from prayer, cannot be from the Lord, but from some of your spiritual enemies; yes, and may you not hope, that whatever convictions of soul you have, which urge you to prayer from a sense of your need, and from any view of the glory of God with whom you have to do, is from the Spirit of God, even in His incipient workings: and O, beware continually, that whatsoever time you quench the voice of prayer, or put away, or to silence, that which urges you to it, you quench the Spirit who seeks to teach and to guide you. And to you who complain of your prayers not being answered, we would offer the counsel to consider how much you have failed in the duty, and in improving the privilege offered you. O, consider how often you have disregarded the precept and counsel of our text! Alas, my friends, we might perhaps show clearly to some of you, that the very cause of your complaint is, your having really prayed so seldom, that the very cause of your remembering your prayers so much,

is, that they have been so few, and so far between. Were you more in the element of prayer, you would so far receive an answer unto them, that you would now know so much of the character and glory of God, that you would think it a greater wonder He should ever answer you at all, than that He should so long have delayed it; and you could not but know that the objects of prayer, when they are in the Spirit, are of such eternal value and excellency, that should God deny your requests till your last hour on earth, be your life ever so long, it were unspeakably more than worth all the prayers of His people, still to wait upon Him for those blessings, even unto the end. *Worth* in *your* prayers there is none, as any procuring cause of the mercies and grace you seek for: but there is infinite worth and value to you in the grace which sets the duty before you, and which bestows upon you the privilege of prayer:—and eternal worth there is in that grace, when it has provided for you in your guilt, a way of pardon and of sanctification to God, and of eternal glory hereafter. The whole of the benefits which you have need to receive, are procured for you by grace, and they are faithfully promised. You have to ask them from God. And though He may seem long to delay, He will not fail in his promises. Remember what Christ declares, "And shall not God avenge

His own elect, which cry night and day unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." He will give you deliverance from all your spiritual enemies, and from all the evils which you now feel pressing upon you. His divine power will be manifested on your side; and it will conquer every enemy. But we would feel warranted to counsel those who are made earnest in prayer, and who have the witness within themselves, that they esteem the salvation of Christ, not only precious, but the one thing needful, to see what they pray for. General earnestness and anxiety are not sufficient in prayer. Consider your special wants; look more and more to the state of your soul with God; and see what it is, that you stand most in need of receiving. Pray and beseech God for the guidance of His own Spirit. Come to Him, just as the disciples did to Christ, saying, Lord, teach us to pray. You go forward in the duty, with all your earnestness, too much in your own strength, and too much leaning to your own understanding. Submit yourselves to God, as He is in Christ Jesus the giver, the bestower of the spirit of prayer. And O, my friends, if you search and examine the matter, may you not well discover, that that which you specially need is, the principles to be implanted within you, which would enable you to pray indeed,

as Christ taught his disciples to do, saying unto God, "Our Father who art in heaven." "We speak as to wise men, judge ye what we say."—We speak to those who have been taught to trust no longer to services of formality, and to prayers without faith, and without spiritual desires or affections; but who feel that they are by nature alienated from God, and from the obedience and love which are due to Him. Have you not to feel and to lament continually your spiritual darkness and ignorance concerning God, and your consequent want of filial reliance upon Him, and filial confidence towards Him? How little do you experience of the spirit of children exercised by you, when you draw near to Him? This you feel and lament. But remember, that He Himself is the God of light and knowledge, with whom there is no darkness at all; and remember that your want of confidence in God, and of filial affection towards Him, is the fruit of spiritual ignorance and death in the soul, which has come upon you in the first Adam. O, let it be the primary object of your prayers, to wait upon God, to remove this darkness and death, that you might know God, and that new affections towards Him, might be established and exercised in your soul. These gifts are procured for you; but the Holy Spirit of God must apply them, He must carry them, as it were, from heaven, and

implant them within you; and then you shall know God as your Father, and knowing Him, you will be enabled to honour Him; and your waiting upon Him in prayer will no longer to you be a service of bondage, but you will experience it to be the very highest enjoyment which you can here hope to have, that you are permitted to inquire at His throne of grace, and to hold communion and intercourse with Him there as the God of your salvation; and there, in His own good time, according to His love, and wisdom, and faithfulness, He will answer you graciously, and send you strength from above.

SERMON XIII.

EPHES. vi. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

WE have been already endeavouring to bring before you the importance and nature of the solemn duty and privilege mentioned in our text, and seeking to make it manifest to you all, that the spirit of true godliness, wherever it is established, is a prayerful spirit, and that all your spiritual interests and prospects are most intimately concerned and connected with the exercise of prayer. That the soul can prosper in spiritual life without prayer, without "*all* prayer and supplication in the Spirit," is just as contradictory, as that our temporal life could prosper without the bodily means of respiration or breathing. And we would yet call upon every individual to consider the subject with the solemnity and care which are specially due to it. Let those who are conscious

to themselves of being strangers or comparatively strangers, to this duty and privilege, seriously reflect how or why it happens that they are so; and if you pursue that inquiry with but a moderate share of the earnestness which it merits, you cannot fail of arriving at the conclusion, that the cause of your being prayerless is, that you have never been truly awakened to consider the awful realities which belong to the state and prospects of your soul with God. And however harshly the name of unbeliever may seem to you if plainly and personally applied to yourselves, we cannot perceive any shelter you have from the full and proper application of that name to you individually who are prayerless souls. Search the matter yourselves, and draw not your conclusions from our, or from any *man's* assertion. Search the matter yourselves, and try what it is which makes you indifferent to and careless of the things of God, and your prospects for eternity, but that you have never yet believed them in truth. And another inference still more important, if possible, cannot fail to come home to you with equal plainness—namely, that while you do not make business of prayer to God, you *seek not to* believe the declarations of God regarding your spiritual condition. If you truly sought to believe and to be enlightened in the knowledge of God, and spiritual, eternal objects, surely you

would seek unto Him whose declarations and promises are so clearly in the Gospel of Christ set before you. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And the conclusion of the whole matter must be concerning you, in your present condition, that you are none else but the enemies of God, and consequently your own destroyers. For, is it not manifest, that whatever may be your outward character with men, you bear about with you in your mind, as its very leading and characteristic feature with respect to God, some ruling principle, call it by what name you may, which repels you from God, which estranges you from Him, and makes you altogether unwilling to enter into treaty or terms with Him at all concerning your personal salvation. Surely this can be no principle of friendship towards God, to say the least of it; and remember that His own infallible testimony is, "He that is not with me is against me." How fearful then must be the delusion of imagining that in such a state of mind and inward character, you can be truly or in any respect Christians—the friends, the children of God.

Now, my friends, I would on this occasion more solemnly call upon you to consider the footing on which we put this matter between your souls and God. I *shall* not *leave* you to

say, that I am in this hint denouncing woes against you upon my own responsibility or authority; for I lodge my appeal with you on the truth and testimony of God. I take my solemn stand with you, as at the foot of His throne, feeling that I am charged with a message from God unto you, held responsible of *Him*, as an organ of communication from God to your souls; and remember that I speak as from Him, and that I put into your hands, as it were, the elements, and show you the process of a spiritual calculation or reckoning, regarding the very facts of your own case; and I call upon you, as rational beings, to sum up the amount, to look at the result which the reckoning must place, distinctly and infallibly, before you; and if you enter not, and that immediately, upon making the calculation for yourselves, you are just proclaiming regarding yourselves, in the presence of Heaven itself, the fearful and appalling fact, that you still resolve to disobey the voice of the Lord—that you still say unto Him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" And from what has been advanced on former occasions from this text, we may well bear witness to you, whose prayers are but formal, and few, and lifeless, that you stand among the number, spirit-

ually and correctly estimated, of those, who pray not at all; and need we go farther, in thus ranking and placing you, than to bid you to look to the simple words of our text, and to say to yourselves, How do *our* prayers accord with its spirit and tenor? Will not the very words proclaim to you, that your formal prayers are altogether dissimilar to that which is here enjoined as the true Christian's needful exercise, and his habitual practice and privilege? O consider, that it is your present condition which we condemn, and of which we earnestly wish you to consider the danger; while we bring before you the hope which is yet presented to you in the Gospel of Christ; that hope is abundant; for the grace of *God* is abundant, and unto its fulness you are invited to come; but the God who provides, and offers salvation, commands and invites you to ask it, by prayer unto Him; and while you refuse so to seek unto Him, you do despite to His gracious offers, and you make choice of your own eternal ruin.

But to those who feel their need of prayer, and who desire to be exercised in the duty, according to the urgent and manifest injunctions of our text, we would seek also to appeal, beseeching them, too, to make calculation of their personal condition and prospects. You complain that iniquities prevail against you; and you profess to

exercise the hope in God, "as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." But see that you exercise not that hope with unholy boldness;—there is danger of your doing it, if the fact be regarding you, in your actual character, that you are not instant in prayer. You complain of your spiritual enemies,—what do you do against them? Do you permit them to assail and to wound you, and to obtain dominion over you, while you pray not to God against them? Do you think that God shall ever give you the victory over them, while you neglect the armour which He provides and offers you for defence? Search the matter; and if there be special enemies of whose power you complain, you may assuredly find that they acquired that power in those times and seasons when you were prayerless. You will say, and truly, that they are with you by nature; that they have, alas! grown up as very members of your spiritual household. We deny it not. But had you till now been more earnest in prayer to God against them, you may rest assured, that now their dominion and power should have been less by far than they are;—had you come to Christ with more habitual earnestness than you did, you should now in Him have more of a victory over them, and they should, if not slain, be already so wounded and weakened, that you

might be enabled to hold more habitual communion with God.

But the special part of our text to which we would now lead your attention, is its latter clause, which shews us manifestly that not only must the true soldier of Christ be prayerful, but that he must also watch unto prayer,—" watching thereunto with all perseverance."

We cannot, we think, imagine any injunction more earnest and pressing to any duty than this is. Its terms are those of a pressing, and urgent, and most important necessity. We must not only pray, but we must watch thereunto. We must not only watch thereunto, but do so also " with all perseverance." All this supposes two things, namely, that the duty and exercise are most needful, and that there are continually opposing difficulties which surround us, to endanger our constancy in prayer; and it is not any undue straining of the import of what is here set before us, to infer, that if our prayers be hindered, their earnestness or constancy interrupted, that then, the enemies of our souls will triumph against us. This is in entire consistency with the whole strain of our preceding context. We have then to inquire, what is practically signified by this watching; it has obviously a reference to the duty of prayer, " watching *thereunto.*" There is a literal

sense, in which the term to watch may be well understood. We know that it signifies, as frequently used in the Scripture also, a cessation, or abstaining from bodily rest in sleep; a spending of the seasons and watches of night, in some special engagement, demanded by a pressing necessity. We call your attention to this literal signification of the term, not intending by any means to enforce it as its leading import, in the words of our text; but to remind you that we must not wholly exclude it, and that if there be many an occasion of temporal urgencies, when the literal duty of watching is imposed upon men, we see no reason why the same urgency may not be frequently experienced by the believer in the duty and exercise of prayer. And however strange it may seem to those who are prayerless themselves, that we should urge this matter, the length of an actual and literal watching, we would appeal to the awakened soul, and ask, does it not rather seem strange to you, that many an urgency may have summoned you to this business of literally watching, and that the urgency of your soul's affairs may perhaps never yet have withheld for one night, perhaps for one hour, your eyelids from closing in wonted repose. Consider the reproof given by the meek and lowly Redeemer to His disciple Peter, in the midst of His own agonies of soul: when bodily rest was far indeed from

Himself, He came unto Peter and said, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" But Peter with all his professed zeal for his Master's service and cause, indulged the flesh which is weak; and behold the melancholy issue! he fell into temptation, and ere day dawned again on his eyes, we behold the unworthy sight of Peter denying his Lord! And we would seek to warn the believer, that if he always yield, even to the weakness of a bodily frame, and neglect or defer the solemn business of prayer to God, it will sadly tell against the spiritual interests of the soul. You have the example of Christ Himself, that He spent many a night in secret prayer with God. And O, my friends, what a lesson is read to you, if ye be followers of Christ, by giddy and thoughtless multitudes, who crowd the scenes of mirth, pursuing the vanities of what they call amusement and fashion,—how little do they grudge, nay how cheerfully do they give, their whole nights to their own profitless, to their own destructive amusements, which ruin the body itself, and enslave the soul to its idols! while Christians will grudge even one hour, taken off from their nightly repose, to commune with their God in prayer! May we not truly say unto you, "Brethren, these things ought not so to be." And on this part of our subject, we would just remark, that it must betoken either some spiritual enemy overcoming

you, or a mind not yet fully awakened, if you feel not that there are seasons, and times, and conditions, more even than others, in the business you have to pursue with God, which demand from you both exertion, and literally a watching unto prayer. The world may call it your weakness or your folly; but that is nothing to you. Listen you to the counsels of Heaven, and to the voice and to the example of Christ, saying unto you, "Follow thou me!"

We proceed to remark, however, that the watching spoken of in our text, while it cannot be once supposed to exclude the literal explanation we have been dwelling upon, especially signifies an exercise of the mind, an habitual watchfulness of the mind unto prayer; a keeping of the mind habitually alive and awake to the solemn duty; in guarding against the dangers which threaten you, and which tend to drive you away from it. And, in the first place, you must guard or watch against negligence of it,—whatever would turn your mind away from the importance and urgency of your spiritual affairs, and of your business with God. These things will continually assail you—they will continually break in upon you; but, watch and see that they produce not with you a negligence of prayer, or a remissness, or carelessness, or indifference of mind, in its exercise. Such remissness or negligence is pernicious,—it

wounds the soul; and if they be the pleasures of life which thus produce with you a neglect of the duty, or a remissness in it, O, my friends, do you not feel how they sting as an adder; how there is poison and bitterness in them, when they leave your heart hardened, your mind insensible and forgetful of its state with God; and how this, if any way indulged, will strengthen and fortify the evil principles of your debased nature, and make you still more averse to pray? Then, it is time to tremble at the prospect before you; when you feel yourself drawn, as it were, into the current of practical ungodliness; this is what your spiritual adversaries seek; and an advantage over you which they well know how to improve against you; and would you be safe from it, you must *watch* unto prayer; and seek unto God, when you feel the enemy approaching, to preserve your mind alive, and awake, to the realities of your spiritual state. And if they be the evils and the crosses of life, which endanger your perseverance in prayer, and threaten to produce negligence or remissness with you; where or how do you expect deliverance from them, by keeping away from God? Search the world, the whole of it and its remedies; all that its connexions, and friendships, and counsel can give you; and you will feel at last that they can but increase your burden, if you keep away from your heavenly Father's presence,

and if you seek not unto Him. I speak to those who have felt the value of having a known, not an unknown God, to appeal to. Raise your eyes, and your heart, and your voice unto Him, the hills whence your strength must come to you, and in Him you will find an arm to sustain you, a power to strengthen you; and if He remove not the evil, He will bestow upon you courage and strength to endure it; and what is still more precious to your soul, faith, and understanding, and knowledge, renewedly to trace His hand in His workings towards you, and to behold that His will is good, and that His dealings are faithful and kind.

But, secondly, on this head, let me remind you; as a practical matter well worthy your serious attention, that every individual, humanly speaking, and in outward and relative circumstances, has, to a certain extent, the command of their own time. Now, you cannot watch unto prayer without considering and remembering habitually, that your time is given from God, that it is a talent committed to you for spiritual use and improvement. You must therefore see what engagements you allow to interfere with the proper times and seasons for prayer, whether secret or social, or public; and here we would place secret prayer the first, without excluding the others. If you permit engagements and pursuits of world-

liness, or perhaps of vanity and folly, to encroach as they please, on these times and seasons, you may well expect to be thrown back in the use and exercise of prayer, not only in losing the time and the season immediately present, but in its bringing upon you a spiritual deadness and apathy in your next and your future approaches to God. O remember that He is a jealous God, that His glory He will not give unto another; and how can the believer expect to obtain nearness of intercourse with God, or to enjoy the divine favour or the light of His countenance, when other objects are by consent, and willing studied agreement, permitted to occupy the place which is due alone to Him; and when you willingly make choice perhaps of a vain and frivolous companionship rather than the seeking of intercourse with God. The conscientious allotment of time for prayer must enter into the practical calculations of every true Christian, if they hope to prosper in spiritual life. You cannot say conscientiously that there is a watching unto prayer without this. And it is altogether melancholy to think, still more melancholy to behold, those who profess to be followers of Christ, believers in God, the children of His covenant, permitting every occupation of time to turn them aside from prayer, and even urging that worldly avocations do so press upon them, that they cannot give due at-

tendance upon this solemn and profitable duty. This is but deceiving yourselves; it is warring openly against the whole counsel of God to say, or even to think, that your business with God must yield to your business with men, and to your worldly pursuits and avocations. Is it thus you would treat your benefactor or friend of mankind, telling him to stand by for the present, when he sought to commune with you, till you could find convenience and leisure? And does not God receive from you the highest disrespect you can show to Him, when you thus make preference of every worldly affair to Him and to His service, and to the cause of His glory? This cannot long surely be the state of any true or practical Christian; and if you find yourselves even once overtaken in it, you have immediate need to flee to God for pardon, and for quickening grace; every act of this kind is in practice a denying of that supremacy which God has over you,—a denying of your own spiritual interests, and it generally ends in your almost charging God with your own errors; for in such cases the enemy cannot but prevail; indeed, he has already prevailed against you: and yet what more common than to hear persons guilty in such a way, repeatedly if not habitually guilty, murmuring and repining at their spiritual condition; and though they may not openly, or in so many words, charge God with

the evils of their condition, yet they will begin to question His grace, and His love, and to be in doubts, and in fears, and in heaviness, when the truth is, that they have turned themselves away from beholding His grace, and from seeking the light of His countenance.

We would be here understood as surely excepting those sudden emergencies frequently arising in Providence, when immediate and unavoidable necessity summons you to acts and services of mercy; for God will have mercy and not sacrifice. But, my friends, even in these, watch also unto prayer, and see that you carry the favour and countenance of the Lord with you into their performance; that you lose not sight of His hand in His sending the dispensation which summons you, whatever it be, and that your present condition of soul be still lodged, in appeal, with Himself! and even this will give more cheerfulness and comfort to the faithful follower of Christ, in the sudden emergencies of life, be they ever so hard, than can be derived from any other source on this side of heaven: watch therefore unto prayer, to keep your record on high, and in all things commit your souls to the Lord in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

We would next observe, that in watching unto prayer, we have need to watch especially against discouragements which must meet us in the exer-

cise of this duty. Impatience and haste, we well know, in any temporal prosecution of business, are the greatest enemies to perseverance and to ultimate success. And if I speak now to believers in Christ, surely you cannot but know how prone you are to attach an importance and value to your own efforts and services; mere formalists in religion do so, and are fully satisfied, alas, to their ruin, that their services are enough, or at least far from being insignificant. But the believer in Christ must have learned not only the folly, but the sinfulness and danger of such a vain and impious calculation. But however much you know this in theory, have you not too frequently to confess, that it is yet almost in theory alone you know it? Do you not still too much, and too frequently forget it in practice. And believe it, my friends, while you do, there is then sufficient ground for you to know, that the hindrances of your prayers have arisen from your not looking unto Him in whom alone they can find acceptance, and by the exercise of faith in whose name, on your part, you can ever experience that they do find acceptance and answer. Suppose, for instance, that you have felt your need of some specific or special blessing; and supposing, too, that you have the testimony of the word of God applied to your conscience, assuring you, that in asking those es-

sential blessings, you seek them in accordance with the will of God; you have been earnest in prayer for them—you have zealously besought the Lord—you have had much exercise of soul, in presenting your supplications before Him; and your purpose even was, as if you would not let Him go till He had blessed you. Observe, now, it is not reproving the earnestness that we now are, or the diligence, or urgency of your supplications. But you have ended the service; you have turned, perhaps in the path of duty, to your wonted occupations; you still feel your want of the special blessings which you had been imploring from God. You feel that you prayed for them: you look back on your prayers, and your earnestness pleases yourselves in some degree. Now, whether do you attach more importance in your own mind, to the earnestness of your prayers, or to the intercession and the righteousness of Christ, as the procuring cause of every blessing to your soul? Are you able to say that you dwell not more on the prayer? Then, in so far as you do, you are acting under the power of a secret but a strong and prevalent unbelief? You are, in point of fact, doing much dishonour to Christ: you are not living a life of faith upon Him, practically: and in such a course, how can you expect that the answer of your prayer can be sensibly given to you—that you

can sensibly experience its answer? This may appear too minute an inquiry to some, but we warn the believer that it is an important inquiry: and that it is, just as you are enabled to realize the glory of Christ, your own entire unworthiness, and the unworthiness of your prayers, that you will experience their answer in faith. "Lord," says the Psalmist, "thou has heard the desire of the *humble;* thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear;" and remember that "blessed are the *poor* in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Seeming delays on the part of God in answering prayer, are a discouragement to the exercise of the duty, with many, and they relax their perseverance in asking. Watch against this discouragement. Every way we can view it, it is unwise to be so discouraged, and to yourselves it is deeply injurious. Can you by searching find out God, can you find out the Almighty unto perfection? You act as if you could, when you presume to calculate, that He can have no wise or adequate reason to delay granting your requests. O, consider that His counsel is eternal, that His wisdom is infinite, and that His knowledge of you is perfect, and of all that can suit your condition; while his grace and faithfulness are unchangeable also. It is, could you believe it, no evidence whatever, that God listens not to your prayer, when He seems

to *you* to deny its answer. It is no evidence that He does not accept it; but He will have you to be humbled and tried. It is the discipline necessary for you; and in the denials you meet with, God may be doing more for your soul, a thousand times, than if you had immediately the full answer of every request you make. What you know not now, you shall know hereafter; but one thing now you may know, that your duty is still to watch unto prayer, and that "with all perseverance." Remember the authority of God, in seeking from Him, and watch unto prayer, by searching and trying whether your prayers have been according to the counsel of God, and the will of His Spirit, and in submission to His supreme and faithful government for you, and over you: see that this believing view be mingled in your prayers, and then you will not so easily be discouraged in prayer; you will wait patiently for that which you seek. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath *long patience* for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." His coming unto you in the answering of prayer draweth nigh, if you persevere in waiting upon Him. But another discouragement to be guarded and watched against, is, the prevalence of spiritual enemies while you pray.

We know that some awakened consciences have deeply felt this discouragement. When they address themselves to prayer, their spiritual enemies seem as if then let loose against them. They are then peculiarly tried and harassed with vain imaginations and thoughts, with impious and unbelieving, and wayward imaginations, so that they become afraid of themselves, and are sadly discouraged in the exercise of this duty. But we would just beseech such persons to consider two things, either of which we think will be suitable to your case. Are you not yet young in the duty,—you have not had yet much experience of it,—you are not yet skilful in wielding the weapons of your spiritual warfare; and the enemies of your soul are indeed peculiarly intent upon you, when you betake you to prayer, seeking in this way to deter you from it. But now is the time for you to watch unto prayer, and that with all perseverance: their rage will be staid, instrumentally, by your perseverance in prayer; and if you give yourself to the duty, you may rest assured, that the coming of the Lord is nigh to you, to repress and subdue the enemies of your soul. You must learn, like a good soldier of Christ, to face your enemies: it will not do to be alarmed and terrified at their number or power,—seek to have the witness within you, that you do not consent to their machinations of evil,—seek to obtain living

and clearer views of God and His character,—pray for this especially; and you will be blest and endowed with such views of His glory, as will occupy your soul in prayer, to the exclusion of the enemies which now you dread. But remember, that by becoming remiss in prayer, you strengthen the hands of your spiritual foes. The next thing on this point which we would have you to consider, who feel the discouragement we now speak of, is, that if you feel this grievance to be now present with you, more than in times past, and after you once thought you had been enabled in some measure to conquer it, it must now have come to you, from some confirmed habit of carelessness or remissness, or deadness in prayer. Some sin, special sins, believe it, have turned you away from your former watchfulness and your earnestness. You have been sheltering some enemy of God in your soul's household, and your business now is, to discover, how it has been, that slothfulness in prayer has come upon you; set yourself to this inquiry, and seek from God guidance to conduct it. And when you have discovered your sin, we need scarcely give you farther direction; for we doubt not you will then feel your need of renewed repentance towards God, and renewed earnestness in prayer to be pardoned; and then will the enemies which now you complain of, not continue to exercise such as-

cendancy over you. And we would direct each class of persons whom we have now addressed, to the bright example given them by the Psalmist, in the very portion of his writings where most he complains of his spiritual enemies, when he is deploring their number, and power, even then he records the noble testimony,—"But I gave myself unto prayer." Let this be your resolution. O let it be your practice, amidst every discouragement; let nothing withhold you from prayer, "Watch thereunto with all perseverance." And one maxim may well be engraven on your very soul and experience as a true one, and applicable to every state and condition alike, of every individual soul,—that, whatever debars you from prayer cannot be of God; and, therefore, that to you there must be both sin and danger in yielding to it. The duty of perseverance in prayer is indeed implied in watching unto prayer. It has a reference to the difficulties which are to be met with, and to some of which we have been endeavouring to attend. Your perseverance in prayer must be produced as ~~in the~~ fruit of your watching thereunto: if perseverance in prayer be not, then there is no watching unto it; but where watching truly is, there, perseverance in prayer cannot be wanting. It is a constant duty,—it is the standing order of the good soldiers of Christ, and hard as its struggles may be, it is a means of

their life and their safety. And ask the whole assembly of saints,—their declaration will be uniform unto you, that in prayer, if they had their hardest contests with sin, and their severest trials of soul; in prayer also they have had their highest enjoyments, and their highest happiness on earth. Take prayer away from them, and you rob them of their peculiar privilege here; chains, captivity, and a dungon, would be but moderate infliction on the temporal soldier, compared with what exclusion from prayer would be, to the good soldier of Christ;—live, indeed, he could not without it; for it is the spiritual breath of his soul; and the spiritual exercise of his life upon earth. And, professing Christians being not more given to prayer, is one cause that their progress in spiritual life is so grievously little, and so sadly hindered. And we have to remember, that in its exercise, they owe not only to God and to themselves, a duty, but they owe it to their Christian brethren; for the injunction of our text sets this clearly before us,—watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. And we cannot but feel fully persuaded, that the reason we pray not more, and with more fervency for all saints, is, that we pray with so little fervency for ourselves. The whole of the saints have a community of feeling as they have of interests and prospects. They receive the same grace; they are

quickened by the same power; they are united unto the same Head; they receive the same Spirit, and they serve the same God; yea, and they have the same enemies to strive with: and we may with safety declare, that none ever was brought in truth to watch unto prayer, feeling his need, but had a fellow-feeling and sympathy awakened within him concerning the state of his brethren of the faith. It is when the realities of the Christian warfare press upon the soul, and urge it onwards to God in prayer, that the soul will feel the dangers to which others too are exposed in the same state; and when they are enabled to look to the everlasting fulness of grace that is in Jesus Christ, they long with sincere and longing desire, and they earnestly pray, that others also may be made, still more abundantly than they, to draw from this fulness. While we are here enjoined to pray for all saints, we must not understand the injunction as if forbidding to pray for some especially; nay, this is enjoined—when for all—surely for all whom we personally know, and for those especially whose spiritual condition we may be more acquainted with. And it is in considering this, that you will find your desires extending from one to one, till they truly embrace the whole household of faith, agreeably to the command of our text. The religion of Christ breathes into the soul brotherly love in its spirit,

It partakes not of selfishness in its nature. Its object is to have that very principle subdued and destroyed in the soul. Wherever the knowledge and love of Christ find admission, there will be found love to His people, and earnest concern for their spiritual welfare: and it is in the exercise of that love towards them, that prayer on their behalf is enjoined upon every believer. And you have continually to remember, that whatever be your own condition, whatever the trials you have, whatever the fears, and the doubts, and longings you have, and whatever the enemies you have to contend with, there are many others similarly situated with you. It must undoubtedly be your feeling, if effectually convinced of sin, that your own case is, of all others, the worst and the hardest. But thousands of others think of theirs as you do of yours; and while this is the feeling of every one truly awakened, knowing the plagues of *their own* heart, how befitting and proper that each should remember his brethren, who are similarly placed; and when you cannot look up to your Father's throne, without beholding that it is to the one grace you are all indebted, that it is to the same glory you are taught to aspire, that your Redeemer is one, and your Comforter one, O let love to the whole people of God find a living place in your soul, and let your earnest supplications ascend, even for all saints. The

greater their increase the better for you, that your hands may in common be strengthened, and your hearts in common encouraged; and above all, remember that the glory of Him to whom you will eternally owe your salvation, is concerned most deeply in your walking onwards unitedly, to serve Him in the presence of all men: that His name will be dishonoured or praised, acccording as His people are seen to be followers of Him, and walking in *His* footsteps as their living Head, and the Captain of their salvation. And if Christ be satisfied in seeing of the travail of His soul in one individual, surely there will be joy in His presence in heaven, to receive in the spirit of His own love, prayers from His children, ascending unto Him from earth, mutually for each other's welfare and good. And how can He, who loved all His people with a free and sovereign love, that was stronger than death, approve the individual who cares for none other? Of such there can be none in His house. Love is the temper of heaven; it is the spirit of God; and watch unto this also, that such a love be found in you, which could not suffer you to remain unmindful of your brethren around you, and in all the world. And to such prayers Christ promises abundant answers, and increasing, perpetual prosperity.

SERMON XIV.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

WE have been for some time past, addressing you, endeavouring to bring before you, and to impress upon your minds, from another portion of Scripture, the nature, the necessity, the importance of those spiritual duties to which every believer is called, and the difficulties and dangers to which they must be necessarily exposed in the Christian warfare, and the provision which is made for them through Christ, in the spiritual armour which He offers unto them for their use. And feeling assured as I do, from the whole testimony of the Scriptures, from the full and recorded experience of the people of God, and from the perfect conviction of my own mind, that nothing else can sustain any one believer in the warfare, and duties, and hardships to which we have been seeking to

direct your attention, but a living and active principle of faith on Christ, and the habitual revelation which that faith bestows concerning His glorious person, His mediatorial offices, His finished work, and His supreme authority and government now in heaven;—I would now desire, in farther dependance on divine aid, to be instrumental, in leading your minds into those views of Christ, as the foundation on which His church is built, as the living Head from which all effectual spiritual influences proceed, which the words we have now read in your hearing are so eminently calculated to be the means of affording.

In entering upon this vast, and sacred, and solemn subject, I cannot but feel deeply my own incompetency, and my personal unworthiness, to handle a subject so exalted and spiritual in its nature, and so vital to the soul in its practical importance. The person and glory of Christ form a subject on which, when we are engaged, we would need to have, so as not to dishonour it, the preparation of the sanctuary above vouchsafed to our souls. And while the solemn and special trust committed to our care, who are commissioned to address you, is to set Christ before you, your only refuge and hope, and your *sufficient* refuge and hope for eternal salvation; the ground of our encouragement is, His own faithful promise, that He himself shall be with us, even to the end of

the world; that while He is personally Himself absent from earth, and present in Heaven, His Spirit will dwell on earth with the soul, and lead it into the knowledge of Christ, and bring the soul and Christ into spiritual union. The same promise is given to those who hear, as to those who speak, in and under the ministry of the Gospel. Were we who speak to look to the measure of competency for commanded duty which we now possess, we should rather say, the measure of incompetency, and to that alone, we could only look at duties with absolute despair, and we could not but shrink from them all. But while we see the duty commanded, we are called upon to look to the promises given, and to go forward in His name and strength who has promised to sustain us. And the same course is prescribed, and all its benefits offered, to those who hear as to those who speak. Preaching the Gospel, and hearing the Gospel preached, are equally and respectively, duties. And the perversion of both is omission, or negligence, or despair, because of experienced incompetency: this is a dishonouring of God, a rejection of the grace which is freely offered and faithfully promised. But an equally obvious, and perhaps a more prevalent perversion still, incident to speakers and hearers, is, a blind and rebellious spirit of self-sufficiency and of pride, a fancied ability, of ourselves, to comprehend, in

the exercise of our natural mind and affections, the spiritual things pertaining to God, to Christ, and salvation. While this error is retained, and while it prevails on the part of those who undertake to declare the Gospel's tidings to sinners and to saints, it must become perverted and polluted by their instrumentality, so far as they can do it; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And the like error on the part of hearers will produce the result which it has wrought ever since the Gospel's proclamation to sinners, over which prophets mourned when they said, "Who hath believed our report?" and over which an apostle mourns when he says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness." But to every individual in our hearing, be they many or few, who seek to take knowledge of Christ and of His salvation, we would proclaim the warning, to rest their confidence, not on what they feel themselves now to be, either with respect to inability, or of competency in themselves. Seek the ministration and guidance of the Spirit of truth,—look to the promises which are given,—renounce both every hope and every confidence in your own strength, and seek to cast off every doubt, with respect to

your own unworthiness, whether God will teach you or no! His word is pledged, that He will do it: His commandment and gracious invitation are gone forth, that *you* should seek this heavenly guidance. O, then, may our minds mutually, as speaker and hearers, be exercised in seeking the ministration and guidance of the Spirit of God, that we may be savingly led into the knowledge of all truth! Christ Himself is the way, and the truth, and the life. It is life eternal to know Him. It must produce death eternal, to be ignorant of Him. And the delusion and destruction of perishing souls are, thinking that an outward and literal knowledge, the mere knowledge that He is, is sufficient, without knowing *what* and *who* He is, both as God, and as a Saviour in all His offices, and while there is much reason to fear that this error largely prevails, I have been urged to undertake an exposition of this portion of Scripture, containing, as it does, the most singular, and full, and explicit description of the Redeemer's character and offices, which the whole Scriptures perhaps contain in any compass so limited. He being to the church *all* that is here set forth, surely it must be the life and security of the church, as individuals, so to know, and so to appreciate and honour Him. We would earnestly warn every one truly engaged in the Christian warfare, that as He is their strength, *their* prac-

tical strength is, to grow in the knowledge of Christ. He is the vine, and you, if indeed you are made spiritually alive, are the branches; and without Him you can do nothing,—without the true and spiritual knowledge of Him, ruling practically in your soul. Just as the whole words of our text represent Him, as ruling and reigning in all His offices, so must the believing knowledge, the appropriating faith of Christ, rule and reign in your minds, by His own Spirit, ere you can move with safety and comfort in the way of peace and salvation. Apart from such a knowledge, every duty will be a burden, every difficulty will be a lion in the street, every threatened trial will prove a stumbling-block, and every temptation will issue in its obtaining a conquest over you. But growing and increasing in the faith and knowledge of Christ, your soul will grow in spiritual life, and stature, and strength. When you are enabled to look unto Him, in His character and offices as your Saviour, then, in the exercise of beholding Him, duties will be enjoyed as privileges, difficulties will be viewed as salutary discipline, needful for your own interests and for His glory, to be overcome by you in His own imparted strength; trials will be esteemed by you but as light and for a moment, and temptations will issue in teaching you more and more your safety under the shadow of His wings, and your

obligations to His everlasting strength and love, who conquered the enemy for you, and who knoweth them who are His own, and how to make for them a way of escape in obtaining the same victory which He also obtained. While we, therefore, profess His name, let us seek to know that name; and let our dependance be upon Himself, and upon the teaching and power He promiseth to bestow, ceasing from confidence in the creature, which is but vanity and sin; and waiting for His own light with His truth, to lead us in the way everlasting.

The context preceding our text, in this chapter, you may find stated by most commentators, to be involved in much of what is called critical difficulty. Without entering upon any lengthened statement of these, we mention them, to assure you, on the testimony of those most competent to survey them, that the difficulties complained of are merely verbal; and such as must always occur in faithfully rendering one language into another. Words and phrases occur in every original language, bearing different and seemingly contrary significations, according to the special position in which we find them placed. The prophet is engaged, at the close of the preceding chapter, in foretelling calamities and judgments to be inflicted on the nation and country of Israel, and which were in their time laid upon them. The land of Zebulun,

and the land of Naphtali, were the parts of the Jewish territory bordering most closely on the Gentile nations. They were the parts, thus, most exposed, naturally, to the invasion of enemies. But their inhabitants also became the most corrupted and the most fallen from spiritual worship and service, as may well be supposed, instrumentally, through the contagion of evil association with unbelieving and infidel neighbours. Both by this, and by the judgments from God which followed, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, called "Galilee of the Gentiles," or, "of the nations," became greatly debased in the commonwealth of Israel, even at an early period. The people were latterly held in low estimation by the other portions of their countrymen; a strong prejudice existed against them, as may be seen in different parts of the Gospel history. Thus, "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," seems to have become a common saying among the Jews in the days of Christ on earth. The people, at the time of Christ's nativity, or rather shortly thereafter, had also made themselves particularly obnoxious to the Romans, by resisting the claims of their dominion and their burdensome impost. And it was for this cause that Pilate, the Roman governor, when some from that district came to worship at Jerusalem, "mingled their blood with their sacrifices," slew them, while engaged in worship, as rebels to the

Roman government. We may also observe here, in passing, regarding that well known passage in the personal history of Christ, when He was asked whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, that we cannot understand the malignity of the Jews, in seeking to tempt Him, without being aware of historical circumstances. The people of Galilee had revolted against the Romans on the subject of tribute, refusing to pay it; Christ was counted a Galilean, for He had there been brought up. Had they been able to seize upon any expression from *Him*, which they could construe or distort into any political sentiment opposed to Cæsar's tribute, they would at once have full opportunity of letting loose against Him all the wrath and power of the Roman government; and we cannot but be the more forcibly struck, knowing this, and bearing in mind the full knowledge which Christ must have had of all their malignity of heart against Him,—with the heavenly meekness, the humility, and the convincing force of the answer which He returned to them. But it belongs more especially to us here, to bring before you, as matter of practical application, that the scheme of redemption, destined for sinners, shines forth in its abundant grace, and sovereign freeness, even in its outward historical circumstances. It was in this debased and polluted region that the glorious Redeemer of men

took up His abode; and there too, He concluded His personal ministry; showing forth the fulness of His condescension and grace,—that it was not any thing good naturally in those whom He came to save, that attracted His love; and assuredly furnishing, even in this fact, encouragement and hope to every convinced sinner, that, polluted, debased, and fallen, as he is by nature, Christ will not refuse to come and to dwell with him! The expression in the first verse of this chapter, "afterward did more grievously afflict," is agreed by the ablest commentators, to signify equally with that rendering, that "He has made, or, will make it glorious, or, more glorious and conspicuous in the latter times." This may appear to many as a translation very contrary to that which we find given it. But those conversant with the peculiarities of language, will be little surprised that many instances should occur, in which the most conscientious and laborious scrutiny may bring out different results, from individual phrases of this kind. But the translation of the phrase we have now suggested, when you adopt it, will connect this verse with the strain of the verse succeeding, more plainly in a literal sense, as alluding most clearly to the appearance and ministry of Christ in that particular part of the land. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." In point of historical

fact, both significations are alike true; for though we are not aware of its having been so dwelt upon by others, as the preceding statement we have now made, has been; it is, notwithstanding, equally true, that though the people of Galilee had been visited previously to the coming of Christ, with grievous and most heavy judgments; and though their region was truly made conspicuous and glorious by the dwelling, and preaching of Christ among them,—yet they, in general, lightly esteemed Him, and refused Him; and history will amply bear us out in maintaining, that if the calamities which their sins brought upon them, before the coming of Christ, were heavy and severe, yet those which they afterwards endured, when they had slighted Christ, and the Romans overran their land, did indeed "more grievously afflict" them still; for it was a war of extermination almost in the midst of them, —a war which partook of no mitigations, and compared with the awful miseries of which, bonds and captivity themselves, as in former wars, would have been kindness and compassion. And thus too, proclaiming to us the lesson,—that if we be favoured with the light and ordinances, and the outward means of the Gospel;—that if with us, in such manner Christ may be said to dwell, our condemnation must be the more severe, if we neglect so great salvation. The prophet goes on,

in the third, fourth, and fifth verses of the chapter, to state the mercies which God had been formerly bestowing upon Israel, multiplying and increasing their number and their national strength; while their own sins prevented them from increasing their joy; and he represents, that notwithstanding many deliverances had been vouchsafed to them,—that the spiritual deliverance effected by Christ, was that alone in which they could truly have *solid* comfort and joy; he represents that their temporal deliverances were soon again forgotten in returning sorrows and troubles brought on by their sins; but that the deliverance which Christ bestows, destroys as if by fire, the elements, and the direful consequences of sin, in the soul individually, in the personal lot, and in the world at large, in so far as the Gospel of Christ shall be received in truth. In the fifth verse he reminds the people of God, that the salvation of Christ, shall be with burning and fuel of fire,—intimating, that the elements of evil shall be consumed by the fire—the purifying influences of the Spirit of God,—influences destructive to sin; and he seems also here, to be keeping them in remembrance, that this purifying must be, through afflictions and trials also, to the church of Christ on the earth, both as individuals and as a whole; the figure of fire employed, denotes both the influences of the Spirit in sanctify-

ing the soul, and the afflictions and trials, through the instrumentality of which this most frequently is accomplished. But the prophecy is calculated to remind us, and is set forth to encourage us, that whatever be the needful severity of the struggle, the issue shall be eternal and glorious,—not leaving the church of Christ, as members, or a whole, exposed to any returning calamity, as the outward and nominal church had been, in the ages gone by, when it had experienced temporal deliverances. And in the name of the church of Christ, speaking its language, and setting forth the grounds of its comfort and joy, and the eternal stability of its foundations, the prophet by inspiration of God, contemplating the glory and the person of Christ, breaks forth into the words of our text,—"*For* unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on *His* shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

The manner and style of this illustrious prophecy must strike the most superficial observer, who at all considers it even literally. The event which it so clearly foretells is spoken of as already present,—so bright and so assured was to the mind of the prophet the great fact which it announces, and so precious in his view, the mighty events which were suspended upon it, with re-

spect to the best and highest interests of mankind. It is impossible by any ingenuity of distortion to make these words apply to any other but to the Lord Jesus. And it is most manifest, from the connection in which the verse stands with those preceding it, that *their* announcements bear a most pointed reference to the coming of Christ, and to His spiritual reign, and to the benefits which were to flow from it. The prophet beheld every true blessing to the church, as depending on this glorious scheme of salvation; and the publication and accomplishment of the scheme, in the person of Christ, to be the source and foundation of hope, deliverance, and joy to believers, in every future age of the world. Indeed, the language of this prophecy is such, that we require an effort of mind to recollect, that when they were uttered, the event predicted was yet many ages future, in its actual accomplishment. How strong and powerful must have been, in this instance, the operation of faith in the prophet's soul! You may ~~see~~ say indeed, that it was immediate inspiration from God in a miraculous manner, and not even the ordinary operation of divine grace, as in the soul and experience of a true believer now. But such an estimate we consider to be not without danger, if it be heedlessly and carelessly made. We do admit that it was inspiration; but we must plead and maintain with

you, that even inspiration, respecting events yet to come, is not contrary, but analogous and similar, in very many respects, to the effectual working and operation of grace, with respect to the same events, when they are already past. Consider *you*, how clearly and fully the great event here predicted is made known to us now, in the Gospel of Christ, as having been truly accomplished. Consider with what coldness, with what lack of interest your mind views it; even as if it were an ordinary matter—a mere historical fact, in which you had little or no personal interest at all! Now, though we pretend and presume not to delineate the process of inspiration as affecting the mind imbued with the spirit of prophecy, we may know assuredly, that *similar* to the interest excited in the prophet's mind, in contemplating events then future, must be the interest excited in the believing mind now, when contemplating them in faith, as events fully accomplished, clearly published and recorded, on the reality of which, the very peculiar feature of the work of the Spirit, is, to make the soul feel that its eternal salvation is suspended. Can they, then, be viewed with any thing like indifference? Can the believing mind be actuated by any thing like a disrelish to the contemplation of them, and can it willingly bid that contemplation be gone from it? Surely it cannot, and thus may each one of you, who are

yet strangers to the saving, the enlightening work of the Spirit of God in your soul, feel, that the mind which is in you is willingly an alien to the great and solemn and wonderful realities of the salvation of Christ. We are far indeed from saying but the believer may experience such a spirit of mind working in him by nature and still seeking to rule over him in practice; but if a believer, surely he will seek and strive to overcome it. Yet we would designate the unbeliever, as a moral and accountable being, perfectly capable of seeing that this mind hostile to the contemplation of Christ, is ruling in him, and he remaining perfectly satisfied *with* that mind, and willingly subject to its power; nay, fortifying himself in it by every argument of a false and deceitful ingenuity that his mind can devise, and still perhaps professing outwardly to be a believer in Christ, when his very consciousness must inform him clearly, that his practical estimate is, the less he thinks about Christ, the more comfortable he will be. O, the depths of the delusions of Satan! when he can thus easily make miserable perishing sinners impose upon themselves; and, we may equally say, O the wretched silliness of the unbelieving mind, into which sin and Satan have brought it, when it can think itself to belong to the true church of Christ on earth, while an enemy at heart and in practice to the knowledge and to the love of Christ, those

spiritual bonds of union, by which Christ, as the head of His body, the church, and they as the members, are held and retained in one. Be not deceived, therefore, God is not to be mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap: and we should think, truly, did we not know by experience the utter deceitfulness and folly of the human mind, in its natural condition, that it would require but little argument or persuasion indeed to convince any one, if they grant there is one iota of truth or principle in the Bible, that if they thus continue to be of the same mind, rejecting and disliking and dishonouring Christ, He must most surely say to them in righteous judgment afterwards, "Depart from me, I never knew you." The event here recorded, of the eternal Son of God, He, to whom all the glorious titles eternally belong, which are given Him in the words of our text, becoming man, assuming our nature and form, and being born as a child on earth, is one in itself, in its very nature, in the stupendous height of its wonders, surely calculated, to strike and impress the mind. How mean and insignificant compared to it are those deeds and actions of men, those events in their history, in which we find those that were high and noble, and royal, disguising and humbling themselves, to accomplish their purposes, whether of patriotism or selfish ambition; and yet on such deeds of men, you

will dwell with interest, and with intense admiration; your mind will be drawn towards them and their character, with what you fondly call generous and stirring emotion; but when the Son of God humbles Himself from the height of His glory in heaven, to be born, and that in a lowly condition, the event is considered as a matter in which there is nothing interesting or important to be discerned. Now this is a fact; we appeal to yourselves, as rational beings, if it be not, with some of you. Thou art the man, we would say to each individual of your number, and thou art the woman. Every fact has a cause, that surely you cannot deny; and what, think you, is the cause of this frigid and cold indifference on your part with respect to Christ, and the surpassing wonders of His humiliation? Why it must be a deep ignorance of God, and worse than ignorance still, an unwillingness to acquire knowledge concerning Him. And with that ignorance of *Him*, there stands connected as its fruit, an ignorance of your condition as His creatures, your spiritual condition, and your eternal prospects. It is both these together which produce the indifference spoken of; you are contented to take the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of eternal objects by hearsay. You only have believed in them by hearsay, and your desire is, for we know it well, to maintain that this hearsay is altogether

enough. Now, how strange it is, that you do not wish even to *hear* any farther, or to seek and acquire additional knowledge? Whence arises this? Were the subject either interesting or important in your view, you would not disrelish it; you would seek unto it, and for increase of knowledge regarding it. O, my friends, deceive not yourselves, but consider the matter with due solemnity and care; and you cannot fail to discover the truth to be, that you have never actually yet believed with the heart, in these matters at all. Your outward profession of belief has been produced with you by some outward circumstances, and not by any solid or sound process of mind. Such an outward profession will not avail, such a heart uninformed by the light or knowledge of the Spirit of God acting upon it, is not united to God, nor made obedient unto Him, and can never therefore enter into His kingdom of glory, without the needful change now passing upon it. And let the declarations of our context and text now encourage your souls to come unto God for the instruction and enlightening of soul, which you truly require: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." And as it was unto them, so shall it be truly, spiritually, and effectually unto you, if you now seek unto God to be taught of

His Spirit, that you may obtain saving knowledge of Christ, as your humbled, and crucified, and exalted Redeemer.

But the initial words of our text admonish us to address a class of persons, who will not easily or willingly conclude themselves to be of the number of those whom we have been already addressing. You whom we now address, have given considerable and serious attention to the word of God, and to the great truths of the Gospel. You feel an interest in them. But, beware, my friends, lest it be a mere interest of sentiment. You can easily understand, in ordinary matters, that sentiment and principle are very different things. Now, we would wish you could understand it here. Sentiment may carry you through the long and exciting perusal of a fictitious tale. In that tale you may meet with scenes of distress and of anguish that may draw forth your sighs and your tears: scenes of wretchedness there, may excite your lively compassion; painted scenes of vice and depravity may excite your indignation and horror; but the perusal is ended; the sentiment has subsided that carried you through, and that roused you, and you are the same thing as ever you were. Now, were this principle, and not sentiment, you have only to look around you in the world, and, to behold the scenes of distress and anguish which surround you there. Prin-

ciple would set you in good, and sober, and active earnestness, to do your utmost to relieve and diminish them. Principle would set you practically to attempt the mitigating of real wretchedness. Scenes of depravity and vice, when beheld and met by true principle instead of sentiment, would awaken and embolden you to reprove iniquity, and to withdraw yourself from every appearance of evil, and to discountenance all its tendencies wherever you meet with it. They are thus very different in their operation and nature. Beware then, lest sentiment be your guide and your leader in the things which are spiritual and divine, and which concern your peace. There may be many different complexions and kinds of sentiment in religion, or, we should rather say, in its appearance and form; but there there can be no principle but one, and that is the principle of a living and operative faith. Sentiment can contemplate the history and character of Christ, and with much excitement and interest. It can dwell thus on the scenes of His nativity, of His life, and of His sufferings and death, and all this be but sentiment still, or, in other words, the power of an excited imagination; for *that* is sentiment. But behold, my friends, the language of our text. The prophet, speaking in the name of all the company of believers, the true church of Christ, not in sent-

iment, but in principle; not by imagination, but in the exercise of a realizing and appropriating faith; looks not merely to the wonderful, the marvellous event of Christ being born as a child, and given as a Son, but says, "Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a Son is given." It is not a matter interesting and wonderful in itself alone, but it is a matter of *theirs*; "unto *us*." It is they who are practically concerned in this business; and to them it is a real and a practical matter. They have to do with it, not for entertainment and excitement, and interest of imagination, and for curious theories regarding an event so surpassingly striking; but they have their spiritual existence, their spiritual life, their actual and overwhelming interests for eternity vested, so to speak, in this very matter. They say, we walked in darkness; we have dwelt in the land of the shadow of death; *we* have been sinning against God; *we* have been bringing wrath and destruction down upon ourselves by our sins and transgressions; we have been going astray from God, and have been made aliens unto Him, and enemies against Him: against *us* the enemies of our souls have prevailed, and they have inflicted and entailed miseries upon us, which now we see have destroyed us. *We* are sold under the dominion of our enemies, and cannot now deliver or rescue ourselves. But, "unto *us*, a child is

born, unto *us* a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder." These are the feelings, and this is the language of faith in the soul. Remember here, that when now speaking of faith and its exercise, I am not assuming it to be faith in the exercise of a full assurance regarding our own personal interest in Christ being already secured. That is a different matter. But I am maintaining that such is the language of true faith, when established in the soul, in its very incipient workings. It teaches the soul to feel its own need of Christ, born as a child, given as a Son, to be made a Saviour suitable to the soul's lost and guilty condition. It beholds, that unto such as the soul itself truly is, this Saviour is needful; and it believes, that unto such as *it*, this Saviour is also freely offered; and even yet, while it has not attained unto the assurance of an interest in Him being now actually obtained, its aspirations of hope and desire are directed towards Him. Now, it is here, my brethren, that the principle of faith, when truly established in the soul, comes to be broadly distinguished from mere imagination. For its very exercise is, to search into the nature of the great event which is here recorded. And therefore we see in the succeeding parts of the text, that the person, the attributes, the offices of Christ are searched into, and a clearness of view

obtained regarding them. Nor do we say that this extent of view is acquired at once, by the believing mind; not certainly at first in its fulness and clearness; but it is certain that the principle of faith searches diligently into the matter; and that the Spirit of God who establishes the living principle in the soul,—guides the soul onward in the acquiring of this knowledge concerning Christ. This is manifestly the promise of Christ to His disciples and people, when He was leaving them personally in the world—that the Spirit would come and testify unto them concerning Him, and manifest Him unto them, until He should be glorified, adored, reverenced, trusted in, and obeyed in love, by those who should thus be taught of the Spirit. The principle or grace of faith reveals to the soul that its salvation does depend on the person of Him, who is thus given and born in the world. As man alone, He could not have fulfilled the work that was needful to be accomplished. Into the nature of that work, though little indeed is the extent to which any finite mind can comprehend its wonders, yet faith as a principle, looks and searches. And where does it discover the wonders of this work? The believer discovers them in himself, when he is brought to feel the convictions of sin in his conscience and heart. He sees its guilt and its evil, its deserved punishment to be the

anger and wrath of God. And in the measure of enlightening which the soul receives in the knowledge of God, it perceives His justice, His holiness, and His truth, formally and solemnly pledged to the inflicting of this deserved punishment *upon* sin. The mind taught effectually of God, not only feels that this wrath is due to it, but truly believes that it must be inflicted upon itself, without the intervention of a surety, and sacrifice being given; and it sees that to endure the chastisement of iniquity, no created being was adequate; and the more this is searched into, the more it is made known to the mind—the more will it see clearly the need there was that this surety should be the equal of God Himself, and that none else could avail; for none else could sustain, without being totally and for ever undone, the almighty anger and wrath of God. And it is seeing and beholding in the testimony of Scripture, and that applied to the mind by the Spirit of truth, that the surety provided was Himself God, that the believer obtains comfort and hope through grace. And were we to state this matter as its nature demands, in fulness and proper extent, it would be to show you, how Christ, in all His offices of a surety, and atonement, and intercessor for sinners, as their prophet and king, as well as their priest,—required to be God Himself. On the full detail of this, time will not per-

mit us to dwell. But what we would seek to bring before you, and to impress upon your mind, is, that the business and nature of faith in Christ, are thus to make Christ known to you in His several offices, not only that He *is*, but *who* and *what* He is, in His very person. And we warn you, that the mere ideal contemplating of the history and character of Christ in the Gospel, without the mind entering into these considerations at all, is but an imaginary, and not a real or saving faith. We do not call religion a science, but we would pronounce it in its nature and power, and process, to be analogous to a science, and that its elements have first to be learned, ere any true progress can be made in its practice; and its elementary truths to be implanted as visible objects *in* the mind, and *to* the mind. Now, Christ is the foundation of all true religion,—of all practical godliness; and the operation of faith necessary to salvation, is that of instructing the soul with regard to His glorious person. We would therefore, farther remark, that it is an essential property of faith, to instruct the soul in the necessity there was for the Saviour becoming man, as He was also God; and it is in contemplating the infinite wisdom, the eternal love, the unspeakable goodness and grace which resided in the eternal mind, in the several persons of the Godhead, in ordaining the way of salvation, in de-

creeing and according together,—that the eternal Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, should become man. It is in this contemplation that the believer is humbled into meekness and thankfulness, and subdued into gratitude and love, towards the God with whom he had been madly at enmity, and against whom he had been habitually rebellious. In His divine nature, singly considered, Christ could not die, yea, He could not suffer, and He could not rise again from the dead, nor be exalted as a Prince and a Saviour. It was for men He was to be a Saviour; therefore He took unto Him, not the nature even of angels,—though that itself would have been infinite condescension,—but He humbled Himself, and was found in fashion as a man; he took upon Him the seed of Abraham. For because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same. In that nature alone could He yield obedience to the law which we had broken, and which the convinced sinner feels that He is continually himself violating in the spirit of his sinful mind. Christ must be made under the law, born as a child, given as a Son to the church. In that nature alone, could He either fulfil the law, yielding it obedience as the surety of His people, that it might be fulfilled in them through Him their representative, and

that they might thus stand acquitted in the presence of God; the law being made honourable, and that the blessings of the divine favour might come upon sinners as we are. And in thus being made like unto His brethren, His people to be redeemed, He established an affinity between God and men, between earth and heaven, "For," as an apostle declares in his epistle to the Hebrews, ii. 10, 11, "It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Well, therefore, may every believer say, "Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a Son is given." God Himself, in the person of this child and Son, descends from heaven to earth, that by His doing this, which is the great mystery of godliness, every believer might look upon Him, as Immanuel, God in our nature, God with us. And here we cannot but remark, if we do truly consider this subject in its spiritual light and importance, the correspondence there is between the very words of this prophecy and the announcement concerning the nativity of Christ upon earth which was

given by angels. They address themselves to men, and they say, "*Unto you* is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord; and then, the multitude of the heavenly host unite in praising God, and in saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Now, my friends, here is the foundation on which a believer's faith rests, God manifested in the flesh. It is here that faith beholds the divine attributes of God made known, and in such a manner as encourages the soul to draw near, and in the God revealed through Jesus Christ, to put strong confidence, as the God of grace and salvation. Other foundation can no man lay, but that which is laid already. Examine, therefore, your own minds, and see if it be here, that you have raised and built the hopes which you cherish. Is it here they are centred? Is it here they find consistent and safe ground to stand upon, and be exercised towards God, that here, in the accomplishment of the prophecy of our text, God Himself is revealed to the sinful children of men. Speculations and theories upon the subject will not do. Here is the door of hope opened, the way of life revealed, and that life freely offered unto you. And we would proclaim it unto you, we would write it, were it possible, upon your hearts, that without the knowledge of Christ in His glorious person and

character, all other knowledge is vain; without the knowledge of God as He is manifested through Christ in His works of wonder done unto the children of men. None other knowledge will reprove or crucify sin in your soul; no other knowledge will produce the love of God in the soul, or incline you truly to seek His face, or to obey His commandments. The practical use, therefore, which we would make of the observations advanced, is, that you have need to see what it is, on which your prospects and hopes for eternity rest? Is it upon the revelation of Christ to your soul? Is it upon Him as he is so revealed? O, see that you trust not to imaginary dreamings concerning Him. And to prove that you do not, search and try whether indeed His person and offices be the great object of your habitual contemplation. Other ideas and sentiments may be awakened and excited within you, and exercised, separately from the knowledge and contemplation of Christ. O, my friends, trust them not, for they are deceitful and vain. And believe it, that when the Spirit of God teaches the soul, He makes Christ to be the centre, the foundation from which all the believer's spiritual views and desires arise, and He makes Christ, and God manifested in Him, the object to which they tend. This is the evidence of the Spirit's effectual working, which accords with the testimony of Christ

Himself in the Gospel, and trust you to none other.

In the next place, we would beseech you, who feel your darkness and your spiritual ignorance concerning Christ, to see that you renounce every leaning to your own natural strength of understanding and mind. Behold my friends the testimony of scripture concerning the Spirit of God, as the messenger of the covenant, the guide, the instructor, the comforter of all the people of God; just as necessary as it was that Christ should come into the world, and tabernacle with men, so necessary is it, that His Spirit should come and dwell with you, for none else, and nothing else, can give you true knowledge of Christ. And in every commanded duty, in the use of every appointed means, see that you seek His guidance, and put your confidence in the promises of His coming unto you. The way for the Spirit to come is opened in Christ Jesus the Lord. The everlasting mercy and grace and love which originated and perfected the way of salvation, are abundant, unchangeable, and overflowing in the mind and character of the Godhead. Come not as righteous but as sinners, and behold in the testimony of the word, that all on the part of God is ready. Christ is given, and with Him, His Spirit will be given, and your souls shall be taught to know the Lord Jesus, as He is here set forth, and it is in the knowledge of

Him, that you can have life, and have it more abundantly. He now freely offers it, and He beseeches you to receive it from Him, as the gift of His own purchase. The attributes and titles of the Redeemer as here set forth, we shall, if God permit, go on to consider as He may grant liberty in His providence.

SERMON XV.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

THE important announcement made in the words of our text is one which demands the most serious and solemn attention from every rational being who hears it. I would now demand that attention from *you*. This announcement, respecting Christ, is a ~~matter~~ of fact, a reality. Its description is conveyed to us here, in clear, emphatic language. Our conceptions of spiritual objects, at best, are but faint, imperfect, and feeble. Even where the mind has been effectually turned to their habitual contemplation, where it feels and acknowledges their vast importance, the views and impressions received must come short, almost infinitely, of what the actual reality is, in the amount both of its essential glory, and of its prac-

tical consequences. When it is here said, that Christ has the government upon his shoulder, we need scarcely inform you, that in the latter words of the announcement, there is a comparison implied, between the government of Christ, and that with which human beings may be invested, with respect to their fellow-creatures and subjects. Government, in its cares, its anxieties, its difficulties, its responsibilities, its details, and its toils, is a burden to any human being in whom it may be invested. This burden is said to be upon their shoulder, who bear it, representing to us two special things,—first, that the mind must *feel* it in the same manner as the body would the pressure and weight of a physical burden; and, in the next place, it attaches importance and dignity, and claims reverence and obedience to the individual who bears it, and who legitimately discharges its functions. In respect to the former of these, that the government which Christ has upon His shoulder can be a burden to *Him*, the supposition itself would be foolish and sinful, and in the words of our text, it is not countenanced or encouraged. But it does remind us,—it calls upon every believer to bear in his soul the living remembrance of the various deeds and sufferings through which Christ is constituted, and manifested to the church, its Sovereign and its Head. His human nature *did* suffer, till He could well

say,—"Behold, and see, if there be *any* sorrow like unto *my* sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger." But then also, as God, He could say,—"I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." In establishing and manifesting to the world the government which is upon His shoulder,—even in His human nature, which He took unto Himself, joining it to the Godhead, He obtained a full triumph over all His and our spiritual enemies,—He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and He received gifts for men,—"Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." All dignity attaches to the person of Christ, in bearing the government on His shoulder, all reverence and obedience are due to Him, supremely. As God, He is the eternal Creator, the supreme and legitimate Sovereign of the whole human race. But as the Saviour and Head of the church, in His special offices, in the fulfilling and accomplishing of which His government is constituted, Christ Jesus the Lord claims from every believer, full, and unreserved obedience in love. And the spirit of mind in which this is given, by His true people is,—"We love Him, because He first loved us." Government cannot exist without mutual

bonds of relation. This, on the part of Him who bears the government on His shoulder, is His own sovereign, free, and eternal love to His people; and on their part, when they become His people truly, it is, their love to Him, through spiritual knowledge of His person, his character, and His government. When we speak here of spiritual knowledge concerning Christ, we mean, that it is distinct and separate from natural knowledge,—it grows not up naturally with us,—it is not naturally, or constitutionally to be found, in the native elements now, of the human mind. By spiritual knowledge, I distinctly mean, that which is conveyed to the mind, in an especial manner, by the Spirit of God enlightening the mind in the knowledge of Christ. I shall never be found denying but the human mind may have a certain knowledge regarding the existence of God, and regarding some of His attributes darkly and dimly; but I must also be found maintaining, that such a knowledge is of itself unavailing towards the discerning of God aright,—that it is not availing unto eternal salvation of itself, and that it cannot be. It produces not practical love to God in the heart, or any practical obedience of love to Him in the conversation and conduct of life; and, consequently, it cannot prepare the soul for the enjoyments of heaven. But this is not all. Natural knowledge, of whatever amount, even

with all the aid which the light of revelation affords to it, does not form any right estimate of God's character, as that is manifested through Christ Jesus His Son. And those who trust to the guidance of their own understanding and reason, unaided by the Spirit, and unrenewed by His power, submit not, in practice, to the truth and reality of what the Gospel of Christ unfolds. Most commonly, they are found rejecting both in theory and practice, either the whole matters of fact which the Gospel discloses; or, admitting what is merely historical of them *to be true*, they still deny, that He whom our context and text speak of, is essentially God, and that in Him, actually, God did dwell upon the earth, and made Himself known clearly, in the perfection of His moral attributes and His government, to the children of men. The mind of man, naturally, being ignorant of spiritual objects, though it may admit their existence, is rather startled than gladdened at their becoming, as it were, manifest and tangible to the mind. And, when we add to this, the repugnance which the mind naturally has, to be equally, or more devoted to spiritual objects, than to those which immediately occupy its affections, and engage its pursuit in this life, we can without any difficulty, account for that deep and settled repugnance, and that hostility to the Gospel of Christ, which is evinced by the natural

mind. For it is impossible for you to read the doctrines of the Gospel,—it is impossible for *us* to preach or declare them, without *your* minds being somewhat and clearly informed of one thing, that, to receive the testimony given, spiritual affairs and objects must come to occupy your thoughts, your pursuit, your mind, your affections. This, now, is the one special thing which, *you*, naturally, are not willing to yield. And hence, those who hear the Gospel, and who are by no means the most deficient in natural knowledge, and in natural strength and powers of mind, become frequently its keenest opposers; we mean, not openly, but in the business of the mind and heart. Their ingenuity, and not unfrequently, all their powers of mind have been exerted, in devising and maintaining objections against it; but while their ingenuity may be great, their arguments must be wrong, even on principles of which they would freely admit the necessity, in arguing on other subjects of importance and interest. They admit not into their theories, the matters of fact which the Gospel discloses; and still they cannot *disprove* one single position which the Gospel maintains to be true; any one fact it relates, has never yet been shown, and never can be shown, to be *in its nature*, impossible or untrue. All the enemies of the Gospel, whether privately in their own minds its enemies,

or more publicly in their writings, do but oppose mere conjecture on their part, to statements of fact on *its* part. The essential doctrine of the Gospel on which all its statements, and all its glorious realities rest, may be stated in few words, by way of illustration to our present remarks. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is a fact stated, "God *so* loved the world." Has this fact ever been disproved? That the Lord Jesus *was* the Son of God, and *is* the Son of God. Has this been ever disproved? To these facts, the infidel and the unbeliever oppose weak and vain conjectures. We admit their ingenuity, we admit the labours that have been bestowed in bringing forward objections. But we maintain our ground on the rock of truth,—we reject conjectures and theories, and we demand facts; and we seek them in vain, from all the united ingenuity and labour of the Gospel's opponents. And in all the history of Christ personally delivered to us in the Gospel, has one statement made, been proved untrue?—never, assuredly, the smallest *iota*. The more they are inquired into, the more that research, and history, and records have been appealed to,—the more that investigations have been extended, the more concentrated and strong does even the historical light of the Gos-

pel's evidence become. To these remarks it may be replied that they are altogether at fault, that to prove a negative, has been never in justice demanded, as any part of rational controversy. To that very point we seek to bring the opponents. Observe and consider what is the true bearing of the case. We ask you not to prove a negative. But if any one reject the Gospel, their situation is this. They are grounding and raising a theory of their own, upon the foundation of mere conjecture, to oppose our theory, which is founded on facts. *Then*, surely we can demand from you proof of your *theory*—your very *maintaining* of it, proves that you yourselves esteem your side to be somewhat, nay, to be *every* thing more than a mere negative. It is, therefore, surely a reasonable demand to ask *your* proof, *your* facts. You are periling your eternal interests upon the theory you have raised, on the opinions you entertain, on the views which you cherish. Are these opposed to the Gospel's declarations and statements of fact? Then, surely, if you are doing in opposition to the Gospel's statements, actually, as much as we are doing in accordance with its statements, in obedience to its revelation, and its doctrines, and offers, it is but reasonable, it is but just, that you should be able on your part, to occupy the same ground as we do. Without this you may say, indeed, that you will take the risk of conse-

quences upon yourselves, but you cannot legitimately deny that you are acting a part, which you would condemn in any rational being, were it a subject of present or temporal interest, regarding which such two and different modes of procedure existed. We think you cannot in truth, you cannot in fairness reject this conclusion. And from it we derive what we deem a legitimate inference, and regarding the truth of which we appeal to yourselves,—that you act in this manner, *because* spiritual things have never appeared to you to be so important or precious as temporal things; and, moreover, that you do not wish to consider spiritual matters more closely, more seriously, or more earnestly than you have already done; and must you not allow that that has been but comparatively little? Now, we would farther proceed to class, with those who systematically oppose the Gospel, and the reception of its doctrines, all those who neglect it in practice,—it signifying but little whether they make outward profession or not of believing it, if they do not actually seek and pursue the objects concerning which it testifies. Into however many classes those who hear the Gospel may now be divided, there shall only be two classes at last, those who embrace, and those who reject it. And you who are careless regarding it at heart, and in your daily practice, *you* must take

your stand in the same bearing towards God, and towards the government of Christ, as those who do more systematically and openly oppose it. And satisfying yourselves with an outward profession, is just as vain a theory to you, as is theirs to them, who seek to contrive a system against it. For this we have the authority of Christ Himself, when He tells us, "He that is not with me is against me." But what we would now especially seek, is, that each one of you considered the cause within yourselves, of such an indifference to spiritual and eternal things. We maintain that there *is* such an indifference with you:—an indifference towards them all, compared with the interest which you feel, and the value you see to yourselves in worldly and temporal objects. *Can* you deny it? We have spoken of the *facts* of the Gospel. We now take up that single fact, which we have mentioned, this fact of your indifference to spiritual objects, as one existing in your mind. Every fact has a cause. And there is no accounting for this feature of mental character, in the minds of all the children of Adam, in their natural estate, and especially in the minds of those to whom the Gospel revelation has come, but that their minds have been rendered ignorant of spiritual things, and alienated from God, by some powerful and deadly process which has passed upon them: and no system or theory will

serve to unfold it, but that which the Gospel reveals, that this death, this spiritual death, has passed upon all, because that all have sinned. Indeed, were we merely ignorant of those things which the Gospel testifies of, their announcement would raise our attention, and awaken our most serious care. But we are more than ignorant of them, it is also a fact, that we do naturally dislike to consider them. And this bespeaks the exercise of a power, either in our minds essentially, or ruling over the mind by some invisible, but sensible process of working, a power which withdraws and withholds the heart and mind from God. This, the whole counsel of God declares: and your business now, is to prove its truth, in yourselves. And it was for the remedying of this, that the facts announced in our context and text became necessary, to be accomplished and manifested, Christ being born as a child, given as a Son, and having the government upon His shoulder. There is a power of spiritual evil, which naturally works, and which naturally rules within us, and concerning the origin and progress of which, the word of God conveys to us full and complete information. There is provided in Christ a spiritual power of good, to overcome this power of evil, and to bring us who by nature are alienated from God, and become His enemies back to Himself, to be His obedient people, His

dutiful children, and the heirs of His everlasting kingdom of glory. As He is essentially God, Christ has an eternal, supreme, and everlasting government over all. He and the Father are one. But we deem it to be the government of His church, for the eternal salvation of every one of His people, that is here especially meant. This government Christ has, in all respects, some of which we now proceed to mention. The work of salvation was instituted, the Scriptures reveal to us, in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, existing in three persons. A work had to be accomplished, arduous in its nature, and wonderful in its manifestations, and in its mighty and eternal results. Sinners who had departed from their allegiance to Heaven, who had become the destroyer's prey, polluted and guilty, were to be saved. Their sins were to be condemned, and the eternal hatred of God to sin made conspicuously manifest. On their sins, punishment must be inflicted in the person of a surety. Power must be provided, on the surety's part, which could undergo the punishment of sin, without being undone or subdued by it; and power which could overcome the adversary of God and mankind. This power was found in Christ; in no created being could it be found. The government of the work undertaken by Him was on His shoulder. It was intrusted to Him. In His

hands it was impossible it could fail, for He was equal in power with God the Father. Christ, thus received, in the eternal counsels of Heaven, the government of that kingdom, which was to be established on earth, and consummated in heaven again, in His bringing many sons and daughters to glory. The accomplishment of the work undertaken, in all its progressive steps, was suspended upon His power as God,—the government was on His shoulder, when He appeared in our likeness, and tabernacled among men: or when He, appearing as the Son of man on earth, when He was made under the law,—when He was undergoing the miseries of this life, not having where to lay His head on His own earth, which the word of His power formed out of nothing,—even then, the government was upon His shoulder. And when impious men rejected, despised, and mocked Him, when an impious judge unjustly condemned Him,—when His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,—when pretended friends betrayed Him, and His best friends on earth forsook Him and fled,—when the most zealous among them was ashamed and afraid even to own Him as master,—and when the wrath of Almighty God was poured forth upon Him, and the rage of all the powers of darkness let loose against Him,—when He hung suspended on the cross, condemned and despised of sinners,—even then, the government was

upon His shoulder;—the eternal salvation of sinners was suspended upon His strength and almighty power as God. Death itself could not retain Him, and He proved openly that He governed and ruled it, when He rose again from the dead, and appeared among men on earth;—and when He ascended again into heaven, where He is now exalted as a Prince and a Saviour. These are the actual counsels and deeds, in which the government of Christ is constituted, as Mediator between God and men. All power in heaven and on earth is committed into His hands. Of this, the Scriptures bear the most full and ample testimony. All judgment is given to the Son,—the whole judicial procedure of Heaven towards the children of men. The power of life and death, of condemnation and of absolution, is put into His sovereign hands; angels, principalities and powers, are subject to Christ's control. All the prophets unite in exhibiting Christ in this view. The greatest monarchs of the Jewish nation, and of some other nations, did but typify Christ in His regal government, before He was manifested personally in the world Himself. "Art thou a King then?" the Roman governor inquired of Christ. "To this end," says Christ, "was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants

fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." The government of Christ, in His mediatorial offices, has for its object the salvation of sinners, by reconciling them to God, and by preserving them by His almighty power, through faith unto eternal salvation. This government is established, as we have already observed, by all that Christ did and suffered, and by what He still is doing, in heaven. There He reigns personally, in the presence of God the Father. His finished work as the sacrifice for sin, and the great High Priest of His people, establishes His regal authority.

But every government must have its administration; and it must be administered in such a way as to give the subjects of it an experience of its validity, its reality, and its influence. The government of Christ is spiritual in its nature, in its constitution, in its object and end. It is administered by the presence and power of the Spirit of God in the hearts and souls of its subjects. We are not now speaking of intermediate and outward means appointed by Christ, sanctioned by His authority, and commanded in His word. We speak of the government itself which He has established, and over which He presides. And as it is spiritual in its nature, we mean having to do with the minds or spirits of men, and with their spiritual and eternal interests; and as its very object is to

bring them back from being aliens and enemies to God, to bring them back from being ignorant of, and indifferent to their own everlasting interests; so it must be, that to be made the subjects of His government, the mind must be visited with that influence, by which this spiritual government is administered,—the influence of the Spirit of God. Now, we mistake altogether the very nature of this government of Christ, if we overlook this very constituent part of its operation. To profess an adherence to Christ, outwardly, is not to be a subject of His kingdom, but to feel and to know the operation of His government inwardly in the heart and soul. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." When Christ Himself departed from earth, He promised that His government should be administered in the souls of His people, by the presence and influence of the Spirit of truth. Before His departure, He intimated to His followers, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you "into all truth." "He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." And Christ's parting injunction to His disciples was, that they should tarry at Jerusalem, until they should be endowed with power from on high. And, to

give evidence to the church and to the world, in every succeeding generation and age, that the presence and influence of the Spirit of God with the souls of men, is the mode by which the kingdom of heaven is administered on earth, it was ordained that the Spirit should descend on those men in visible appearance from heaven, which it accordingly did, to show forth the reality of its presence, even in a miraculous aud manifest manner. Nor are we to suppose, that the reason of this manifestation was, merely to endow the apostles with supernatural gifts. To that object it was not confined. It was for the purpose, as we have stated already, of making manifest unto all, that the work of the Spirit of God in the souls of men, is an essential and constituent part of the business and work of salvation—that Christ did purchase this by His own work on earth,—that God in Him was pleased and satisfied, and that the Spirit could now come and dwell in very deed with men upon the earth. And this Spirit, when given, did then work with miraculous and mighty power, not for the sole or exclusive purpose of enabling the apostles to speak in divers tongues,—not for the immediate and sole purpose, that through their so speaking at that time, even thousands should be converted, but also for the purpose of showing, that the Spirit was God, as Christ was God, and that He could work powerfully and

mightily in the mind. And what greater—what more striking and incontrovertible proofs could be given of the efficacy and power of His working, than that so many human beings, who were but as yesterday the despisers, the enemies the persecutors, and the murderers of Jesus, should to-day be seen crying out for His mercy, and seeking for his salvation, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Could any reasoning do this, could any human eloquence do it? The very idea is foolish. Could the beholding of wonders and miracles do it? No. They had seen greater miracles done by Christ Himself than they that day beheld; but the powerful operation of the Spirit of God, when poured forth from above, when it visited their hearts, did enlighten their souls in the knowledge of Christ, and did make them willing to embrace Him, and to seek the blessings of His salvation. The work thus performed, was more wonderful still than the gift of tongues to the apostles themselves; and here is the testimony raised, to the work that is needful in each one of us, if it have not yet been established in us, to make us subject to the government of Christ, and earnestly to seek His salvation. We behold, in the miracles of the day of Pentecost, in the conversions to God which followed it, the beginning of Gospel ages made manifest; it is the same in the New Testament church,

as the passage of the Red Sea was in the Old, when God brought forth His people out of the house of bondage. It establishes, and it signally proves, that the government of Christ which was then constituted and revealed by His having finished in righteousness the work given Him to do, was now, and should continue to be administered by the Spirit of God, in the heart and soul of every sinner who is converted, and sanctified, and saved.

But farther, there is here, we mean in the spiritual administration of the government of Christ by the Spirit, as exemplified in the manner which we have noticed, evidence given, of what this work of the Spirit consists in; the individuals of whom we have spoken, those converted when the Spirit's influences descended, were formerly the enemies of Christ and of God. That they were the enemies of Christ, we cannot doubt; for the apostle who addresses them, under the guidance and power of inspiration, charges them with the fact; and that they were the enemies of God, is manifest from the manner in which Christ Himself continually addressed them, while He was present among them on earth; and moreover, it might be very clearly brought out in proof, from the history of the Gospel, that it was their ignorance of spiritual things, their indifference to spiritual things, and their dislike to them, which specially operated in their minds, in their

rejection of Christ, and in all the hatred with which they persecuted and reviled Him, and put Him to death. But behold the change! They are made the friends of God—the friends of Christ, the earnest suppliants for His grace, and favour, and mercies,—it is said of them that "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," those who till then despised the apostles, and hated their doctrine and fellowship. Here it is manifested unto all, that the nature of the work which the Spirit performs in administering the government of Christ, is, to subdue the enmity of the natural mind, to enlighten it, to remove its ignorance, and enmity, and to bring it into subjection to the rule and authority of Christ, beholding now His preciousness and His glory, and seeking to obtain the inheritance and kingdom which they formerly despised and rejected. We conceive this to be so fully manifested and made known in the history of the Gospel, that to deny it, is wholly to deny the Gospel's authenticity and truth. The government, Christ bears upon His shoulder. He has purchased the benefits of which we, as sinners, stand in need; He has power to communicate them to whomsoever He will. He invites *all* of us to come to Him, that we may obtain this change of heart and mind and character which constitutes spiritual life to the soul, and which prepares it for life

everlasting. He manifests unto you that the Spirit of God, equal with Him and with the Father in power, is co-operating with Christ in thus bringing sinners back unto God,—that by the Spirit the benefits are applied to the soul, which He, the Mediator, has purchased for you, by all that He did and suffered on earth, and which He is now exalted to bestow. He sets forth clearly that these benefits are free, that they are bestowed not upon those who are His friends, but upon those who are by nature His enemies, and who are hostile in their minds to whatever is spiritual, and heavenly, and holy. Unto you, therefore, who have never yet obeyed the Gospel's invitations, it still proclaims pardoning mercy, enlightening, converting, and sanctifying grace. The Gospel brings before you the government of Christ,—it brings near to you the kingdom of heaven. It demonstrates unto you, that that kingdom must be within you.

Now what can it avail you to be merely informed, that Christ has this government upon His shoulder, unless you be made the subjects of it. You must be either its subjects or you must be its enemies. Every one now in our hearing is in either of these two conditions. O let each one of you inquire what is your personal condition and character. We endeavoured at the outset to shew, that your disease of soul consisted in an alienation from God and from spiritual things,—

that the fault lay, not in the want of evidence on the Gospel's part, but the want of desire on your part to submit yourselves unto its doctrines and its precious truths. We have now been endeavouring to set before you the manner in which, under the government of Christ, administered by His Spirit, the natural mind is subdued, enlightened, converted, and changed. Do you seek this Spirit from God? Do you desire to receive His counsel, and to be visited by His saving power? Alas, you do not! Now in such a course of conduct you are resisting the government of Christ, you are acting as his determined enemies. Let your character be in the world what it may, such is your character in the sight of God, and if this your course of conduct be persisted in, your end will be that of His enemies. But now you are called upon to submit yourselves unto Him, to come as sinners seeking to be instructed by His Spirit of truth, to be converted from your sinful estate and your unspiritual character, to be made the children and the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Rest not satisfied under the power of the evil, unbelieving mind. The doubts, the dislikes, the repugnance you feel to the business of being converted, renewed, and sanctified to God, all that, is the very spirit of enmity which has to be subdued within you. It is to bring back such as you now are, that the government of Christ was

instituted, and established, and manifested. In that government of His there is abundant power to accomplish in the hardest heart all the necessary work. There is abounding grace to forgive all your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness; there is overflowing compassion and love to receive you, and to bless you abundantly. But O remember that the word of invitation is addressed unto you, *now*, that you should come to Him. His promises are set forth to you; and His threatenings also, if you refuse to obey the offers which now He gives. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him who speaketh from heaven." And let those who make profession of obeying the Gospel look to their condition. Are you, in truth, made, are you become, the subjects of this government of Christ in your heart and soul? Is there any evidence with you that it has ever been administered in your case by the Spirit of truth, effecting in you the work, the change, which is set forth in the Gospel as constituting the business of personal salvation. Have you felt yourselves to be sold under sin, and by nature the enemies of God, and have you seen the guilt, the condemnation, the hatefulness of such a condition? Has such a view yet awakened your anxious concern, and

made you to say in the language of your soul, "What shall we do?" O, my friends, if spiritual objects have not become unto you, in your practice of heart, in your habits of mind, the most precious, you must still be accounted as those who are strangers to the government of Christ, and if strangers, then His enemies. It is not they who say, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into His kingdom, but those who do the will of the Father, and His will is that you should honour the Son; that you should receive Him, and that you should participate now in the spiritual blessings and privileges of His kingdom. You do but deny and betray the Lord of glory by an outward profession, while the heart remains satisfied without being subject to His authority, and rejecting the grace which by His Spirit He offers, to subdue your souls unto Himself. Surely the Gospel makes known to you, that without being born again you cannot inherit the kingdom of God; unless you be subject now to the government of Christ, that you cannot expect to reign with Him when he shall finally triumph in the kingdom of His Father above, when all His elect shall be gathered from the four winds of heaven, and when they shall be made perfectly blessed. You can have no part or lot in the inheritance of the saints there, unless you have now an interest in the blessings of Christ in your own soul,—a sharing, an actual

sharing in that rule and government of His which He administers by His Spirit in the souls of His people. Search and examine yourselves, therefore; prove your own selves whether ye be in the faith. If you be under the government of Christ then surely you must be found seeking actively to glorify Him. If the Spirit have visited your soul in saving power, it must be, that you have beheld so much of the excellency of Christ as to make you sincerely zealous to glorify Him,—to be made like unto Him, and to be fitted for the enjoyment of His kingdom above. These desires, these purposes of heart, these true and zealous endeavours and efforts, are the evidence in the people of God, that they are brought under the government of Christ: they are His friends,—and He is not ashamed to call them brethren. He will glorify them with Himself.

And while the words of our text proclaim to the unbeliever the offers of grace and salvation,—while they testify, that there is deep and solemn reality in all that the Gospel unfolds,—while they testify that the government of Christ belongs to the mind and soul of man; and that its very essence and nature are, to effect a change on your natural dispositions, and on your natural character—it also proclaims to those who are satisfied with the outward profession and name, with the form of godliness while denying its power,—that

their only safety is, to experience in their soul what the power of godliness is, in bringing back the heart unto God;—to seek this now from Him who has the government upon His shoulder, and who faithfully promises, that whosoever cometh unto Him, shall in no wise be cast out.

And to those who have taken knowledge of Christ, our text proclaims glad tidings indeed, and of great joy. All your interests are secure in the hand of an almighty Redeemer. His counsels are from eternity, and His love and truth abide for ever, to fulfil in your souls, the good pleasure of His goodness. His government is over all. Have you felt, and do you feel your unworthiness of His favour? behold in Him, that His love is free and sovereign, and exercised towards those who were his enemies,—that this is the very constitution of His gracious government,—that it was when you were enemies He died for you, and now He liveth for evermore to plead your cause, to procure for you, to bestow upon you, all the fulness of blessings which He hath in Himself, and which He knows to be needful for you. Do you feel your continued sinfulness of mind,—your natural estrangement from God?—the government is on His shoulder. He can reprove the enemy and deliver you from the destroyer's power. The gates of hell can never

prevail against Him, and you have in Him the surety of your own final triumph. Do you feel your ignorance of spiritual things, and especially of His glorious person and of the riches of His grace? It is He on whose shoulder the government is, who first commanded the light to arise, and to shine out of darkness, and He will make the darkness to depart from you. He will make you to be light in the Lord. Do you feel dangers and temptations surrounding you? He too was tempted as you are, and He knows how to succour you. In His temptation He overcame, and that as your surety, that He might secure the same triumph for you; and because He liveth you shall live also. Do you fear the power of the world, and the dangers to which its cares, its pleasures, its pursuits, and its losses expose you? Be of good courage, He hath overcome the world, and the like victory He will give unto you. And all your temporal, and all your spiritual lot is in His hands, to measure it forth to you, and to ensure your everlasting safety. Could you wish it to be in better hands than in His? Seek nearness unto Him, and rest not satisfied with *calling* Him Lord. Wait upon Him for the continued, the increased bestowal of His government's blessings upon you in its administration by the Spirit of truth. His light alone can give you knowledge

of Christ, and peace and joy in believing. Wait upon Him and you shall not be put to shame. He on whose shoulder the government is, will make all things work together for your spiritual good, and your everlasting joy with Himself in His kingdom above.

SERMON XVI.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

And the government shall be upon His shoulder.

IN addressing you from these words on a former occasion, time did not permit us to enter so largely upon the subjects which they embrace, as their importance demanded. The doctrines of the Gospel stand essentially and inseparably connected with its duties. The former may be viewed as a theory, while the latter are overlooked and neglected. This is a separating of what God has joined together. And however necessary and essential it is to every one of you, that the doctrines of the Gospel should be clearly and fully understood by you, *we* must not encourage any system of teaching, or *you* of *hearing*, which might have even a tendency in your mind, to produce an undue preference to doctrines over the active duties of the Christian life. It is on this principle that I feel it matter of conscience and duty, *now*, to recur to the subject of our text

—the divine government of the Lord Jesus. As a doctrine it stands pre-eminent in the system of divine truth; and just in proportion to the place which the doctrine occupies there, must its practical results be, in the Christian life, when it is duly received, and cordially embraced by the mind. We took occasion, in already addressing you from this text, to bring before you the leading facts in which the truth stated in our text, has been manifested to the world. Christ has the government on His shoulder, in His undertaking, and in His perfecting the work of redemption for sinners. This government was assigned to Him in the eternal counsels of Heaven. In the fulness of time He came, and published the doctrine most fully and clearly, both in what He taught, and what He did, and in what He suffered. It is the government of God, committed into the hands of Christ the Son, for the salvation of sinners, for the safety of the church as a whole, and as individuals, for bringing many sons into glory. This by Christ is clearly manifested. In every page, nay, in every act of His life upon earth, He established by proofs, incontrovertible and sure, that He and the Father are one. Christ, in addressing the Father, says, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." The works which He wrought continually demonstrate this truth. He showed forth His divine power as

God. Every power and element of nature was obedient to the word of His mouth—manifesting clearly, that in His person resided the almighty power of the God of nature. He spoke and commanded in His own name, and not in the name of another. The most stupendous miracles which He wrought, only cost Him the uttering of the word, and His purpose was accomplished. With respect to human beings in their bodily and their mental state, He demonstrated that they were in His hand, as the clay in the hand of the potter. All the spiritual agencies of evil were also subject to the word of His power. The government was upon His shoulder when He tabernacled on earth. And as in His active life, so in His passive obedience, in His sufferings, and in His death, the same truth is brought out with equal demonstration and clearness, were our minds prepared to view moral and spiritual truths and facts, as they are to investigate more palpable and sensible objects. The moral attributes of the Almighty Jehovah, stand opposed and hostile to the moral evils of sin in His rational creatures. This essential truth, so necessary for us to know, was testified by Christ in His own personal life. While His works, and doctrines, and miracles, evidenced forth His Godhead, He was altogether, and supremely, in His active goings, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

To establish this essential doctrine, by a personal and practical exhibition of it in our nature, we must consider, as a special part of the scheme of that government concerning which our text gives testimony. This, by Christ, was amply, and clearly, and perfectly fulfilled. But this is to be viewed, not separately, but in connection with another essential truth—that with God resides the attribute of mercy, and of love towards His rational creatures, who did become, in themselves, unworthy of His favour, obnoxious, and exposed to His righteous wrath, and also miserable in consequence of their apostacy from God. Now, while Christ did manifest in His life, and in all His works and miracles, that He was God, He manifested abundantly and conspicuously, that in the Godhead resided the attribute of compassion and love towards sinners. "He went about continually doing good" to the souls and bodies of men. None that sought His compassion and aid was ever refused by Him. The most heinous offenders met with, from Him, forgiveness, pardoning mercy, and grace. His doctrine was, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." The whole life and doings of Christ formed a living comment upon the truth of those gracious doctrines of His. Who ever sought His aid, His compassion, His power or

grace, and was rejected? Never did one. We behold in this, an essential part of that government which is upon His shoulder, manifested to us the children of men, and brought within reach of our observation. It is the marvellous and the precious light which was manifested by Christ in His person and character on earth. In Him, the tender mercy of our God is brought forth to conspicuous view; and on His shoulder this gracious government still is; and unto the same grace and mercy residing in Him as the unchangeable God, while He is now exalted in heaven, the awakened, and convinced, and anxious sinner is invited to come, with the assurance given that he shall in no wise be cast out.

But we come now to another part of the government of Christ in the scheme of salvation, committed unto, and constituted in Him; that part of all others the most important,—if indeed there be any distinction of parts—for us to know, and to rest upon for peace to the soul, and for assurance of a full acceptance with God. This is the atonement which he made for sin, in His own person on the cross—the chastisement of sin which He endured, the death which He died, and the victory which He won. To this part of the subject we must demand your special attention. We must consider here, the actual relation and circumstances in which man is placed with respect to God his Creator. Man was plac-

ed with God in a covenant relation. He stood with God as a party, in a covenant or agreement made with him. In other words, less objectionable to some, perhaps; God in His government over man, by sovereign right and authority, exacted perfect obedience to His own will or laws, from the rational creature which his own power had formed. He proposed to man, or promised unto him, eternal life and happiness as the reward of this obedience. But He threatened or denounced His anger and wrath, as the punishment of disobedience. This penalty was incurred by man in his disobedience. Now, the government of God with respect to man in his fallen condition, implies a judicial sentence, already pronounced against him, in consequence of transgression. Over every son and daughter of Adam, this sentence is suspended, as the wages, the fruit of the sin that is now in their nature, and from which flow all their actual violations of the divine law. This is an essential part of the government of God over us: this judicial sentence is already pronounced against us. There is with God, as an attribute and perfection of His being and character, mercy, grace, or love towards sinners; but being a God, too, of eternal and unchangeable justice, and holiness, and truth, His mercy or love cannot be received or enjoyed by us, without that sentence being cancelled. Now, the

government committed to Christ, embraced, as its special and important part, the cancelling of this judicial sentence. This He undertook to do, by suffering, enduring in His own person, the penalty which the judicial sentence implied. God is manifested in the Scriptures unto us, as entering into this counsel and covenant with Christ—agreeing, consenting, determining, to accept a surety, a ransom, for sinners, in their place and room. The Son, Christ Jesus, is represented unto us, as consenting to become such a surety for sinners, and to take unto Himself "a true body and a reasonable soul," that being made the ransom or surety, He might endure the sentence already passed against the sins of His people. These are *parts* of the counsel of God, of the government of Christ entrusted to *Him*. Christ has come, and has made them manifest. We find Him declaring this counsel of God largely and abundantly in the Gospel record. And thus, we behold Him enduring the penalty of transgression,—the anger and wrath of God in His soul, and in His body, in His whole life on earth, He underwent the like miseries in the life that now is, as are to us the fruits and consequences of sin. In His agony and bloody sweat, we behold Him suffering in body and soul, the anger of God against sin. And in His trial, His crucifixion, and His death, we behold Him

enduring the same penalty. In His resurrection from the grave, we behold Him perfecting the work which he had undertaken;—we behold His Godhead power clearly displayed, and the scheme of His government, for the redemption of sinners, manifestly and eternally confirmed. That He did endure the penalty of transgression, is the fact, of all others, most decisive, most important, and most precious, with respect to our condition and to our relation with God. That He had power to do so, and to overcome, sustaining the anger and wrath of the Father, due to sin, arose, from His being Himself essentially God, as He was also man. The anger and wrath of God, we are to consider as inflicted, not on the divine, but on the human nature of Christ,—upon His true body and His reasonable soul. The former view, namely, that His divine nature could suffer, would be a contradiction in terms, a moral, an eternal impossibility. And in *His* suffering as He did, the moral attributes of God are brought forth before us, in conspicuous manifestation and glory. The justice of God, His truth, His holiness, His hatred of sin, are here displayed in actual deeds of wonder and of unsearchable wisdom. And most conspicuously here stands displayed the love of God to lost and perishing sinners. In the whole procedure of the government of God, ordaining the scheme of salvation through Christ; in every deed

and step of its accomplishment by Christ, the divine attribute of love, in all the persons of the Godhead, shines forth displayed; and abundant consolation and hope, are presented and offered to every sinner hearing the joyful sound of the Gospel. And the completion and perfecting of the work of redemption by Jesus Christ,—the government committed to Him being thus constituted, confirmed, and established, is manifested to us, in three special things;—His resurrection from the dead, His ascending into heaven, and His promises made unto His people previously to His suffering, and before His ascension on high, having been largely and manifestly fulfilled, immediately after His ascension, and in every age of the church, since that period. His Spirit came, and still comes, though not now as at first, in miraculous manifestations, He enlightens, convinces, converts, and sanctifies the soul, creates it anew, and restores it into spiritual life, and prepares it for the enjoyment of heaven. And be it here observed, that the government which Christ has upon His shoulder, is proved and manifested most of all, now, by the ministration of the Spirit to the souls of believers, according to the promise of Christ. How, some may ask, is this confirmation known? We answer, In the experience given to believers, in their own mind and soul,—in their very consciousness; and in the exhibitions which their

minds' history and state present to the observation even of others, even *before* their own experience has yet *full* knowledge of the glory of God in Christ, or of their own certain interest in Him, and in His favour as the God of their salvation. This work of the Spirit of God is proven and manifested, in the mighty and effectual change, produced by it in the human mind. When we see the careless and hardened, and unbelieving sinner, who regarded not God or man, humbled, and trembling, and fearful of the coming wrath of the Lord, and anxious now above all things how to escape that wrath; when we see the mind that was wedded to sin and to folly,—that loved and could find pleasure only in the practice of sin, now hating sin with a perfect hatred, and seeking to escape from its power; when we see the man, who solely cared for the things that are seen and temporal, now counting them but loss that he may win Christ, and be found in Him;—when we behold the mind which before was utterly ignorant of the glory of God, and the reality of His government, realizing in itself, in all its habitual workings and thoughts, the glorious perfections of God, and humbled into the dust before Him; we are constrained to exclaim,—Surely this is the finger of God. This, in its own nature, though not so conspicuous outwardly, is as clear a manifestation of the power of God, as any of those miracles which

Christ wrought on the earth. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." And the more we study the elements of the human mind; the more we contemplate the depth of root which sin has obtained there; the more we consider how thoroughly in all the mental powers of man, sin is cherished, and loved, and habitually practised, which God esteems to be evil, and that man in his natural condition esteems and defends it as good,—the more clearly will we behold the divine power of God exercised, in such a mind being changed, to make an estimate of all things, altogether different from what it made before,—to hate and abhor that which it formerly loved, and to love earnestly and devotedly, that which it formerly hated. This implies a change made on the very nature and inmost elements of mind, in the individuals who exhibit the proofs of it;—and well may we exclaim with Zechariah the prophet, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." So to speak, this is the executive part of this government which Christ hath upon His shoulder, administered and manifested upon the earth. We are called upon to behold it. We read of it in the Gospel, as the very business of the government of Christ: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the

kingdom of God." We read and hear of it in every age of the church, we behold it personally, alas, indeed, that we do so little! in the people of God around us; and every one of that people, if they do not yet behold it in themselves, as some of them truly and assuredly do, yet they are enabled in truth to say, that of all things else, they do most earnestly seek it: and in every one of these, *as certainly* as they have been made to seek it, it shall be finally and fully accomplished, not by might or by power, or by merit in them, but by His divine faithfulness, power, and grace, who has the government upon His shoulder.

The object and end of the government of Christ, are the salvation of sinners, and the manifesting forth of the glory of God in that salvation, and in *their* everlasting happiness and glory. The extent to which this end and object of the government of Christ enter into all proceedings of God with respect to our world, is a subject, we fear, which is too little contemplated, even by the people of God themselves. On this subject, however, the word of God is explicit and clear in its testimony. This is the object, and this the end of God, in all His procedure regarding the world we live in. In other words, the salvation of His people, through the government of Christ, is the end for which the world was created. We know how much the human mind, in its natural work-

ings, will demur to this doctrine. Its own separate interests, the temporal interest of mankind, what is called their happiness here, will be more taken into account in our natural reasonings than the salvation of sinners, and the showing forth of the glory of God in that salvation. But we must take the declarations of God Himself, of His inspired word, as our rule of judging, and not the reasonings of men. We have this authority, as you may see, for instance in Ephes. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy* and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace,* wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom, and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which he hath purposed in Himself: *that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heav-*

en, and which are on earth, even in Him." And, again, Ephes. iii.—" God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: *to the intent* that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the *eternal purpose* which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." That this is the great end of creation, the showing forth of the glory of God in the salvation of His people, we are called upon to believe; and though it may seem to our reason attended with difficulties, yet one thing is certain, that to those who become spiritually acquainted with the doctrines of grace—with the prospects opened up to them by the enlightening of their minds in the knowledge of God, and of His attributes, and character, and government, which is given them through Jesus Christ, this purpose of God does become the highest in their view—it does appear to them a purpose worthy of God, and according, in all respects, with that view of His character, and of this world's scheme, and circumstances, and history, which a spiritual enlightening will unavoidably bring to them. And on principles of sound reasoning, we may most fairly argue, that such persons alone can be competent judges; and, just in the proportion or measure in which they are privileged to advance in the discernment and knowledge of

spiritual truths and objects. Others regard them not, in their practice, with that attention which is due to them, and not knowing, they cannot competently judge them. That difficulties accompany this view to the exercise of our mere reasoning powers, we most readily admit; and that perplexities may arise in considering it, is also unquestionable. But we must take the facts of the Christian. revelation as they stand. Surely it is not too much to say, that whatever part of the works and doings of God in our world, we make a subject of attention and thought, the same kind and species of difficulties will continually meet our way. We see certain facts before us. To account for them, or to know *why* they are so, and why they are not differently arranged and constituted, into a system, which to our view might appear a fairer and a better, we are altogether unable. To say, *why* God should have constituted such a scheme in the government of creation and providence, when, to our view we are prone to think He might, in His almighty power, and wisdom, and justice, and goodness, have formed a better scheme,—is a matter altogether beyond the limits of our weak and feeble and erring minds. Even on this subject, we are called upon to reason with trembling and adoring humility—to confess our own weakness of mind, and to admire and adore the manifold wisdom of God. Surely in all His works *He* has a certain, and fixed, and definite ob-

ject in view. To imagine otherwise would go all the length to deny His existence wholly. And to think ourselves qualified to scan the counsels, to unravel the plans of infinite wisdom, is the arrogating to ourselves of a place, which the voice of reason itself, if listened unto, would loudly proclaim, to be in no manner properly ours. The same exercise of humility, and meekness, and wisdom, is due, in considering the revealed scheme of salvation. We behold that its progress and exercise are partially granted, or imperfectly making head in the world. But in the same manner, all the bounties of God in the natural world, and in the dispensations of His providence are granted and distributed. The facts we know, but the reasons of them we know not, and cannot. The things which are secret belong unto God. And where He hath spoken and wrought, there, it is our duty and privilege to follow after Him, and to trust in Him, to seek the benefit of what He hath made known unto *us*. This is what mankind are by nature and reason prompted to do, regarding every thing pertaining to the life that now is. What then hinders the same course of action being followed in things pertaining immediately to eternal life and salvation? It is something wrong with man. It is a blindness of mind respecting the nature and the reality of spiritual and eternal objects, which has come

upon him as the evil fruit of original apostacy from his God. O were this one fact taken into consideration by you,—that there is, naturally, such a spiritual darkness with you, such a constitutional unbelief and estrangement, from all that lies beyond what is now seen and temporal,—might not that of itself demonstrate to your heart and conscience, the need you have of the government which Christ has upon His shoulder—the need you have to receive the benefits of that gracious and marvellous plan in all its fulness; to come now unto Him, on whose shoulder the government is, that He might rescue you from out of the kingdom of darkness, and bring your soul into His own marvellous light—that you might obtain for His sake the cancelling of that sentence of condemnation which your sins deserve—that conviction of sin, as committed against God, which would show you its actual evil, and its hatefulness to God—that you might obtain that enlightening of mind, that renewal of your understanding in things divine, which would show you their reality and their glory, and which would make you earnestly to seek an interest in them. We would earnestly urge and press it upon you, that your own natural and habitual state of mind requires the gracious interference of God on your behalf. You cannot change or alter the mind which is in you: that is most true. But God

can do it. He is set forth to you in the government of Christ, in the Gospel of salvation, providing for you in His everlasting love a way in which, thus to change and renew your mind—in this consists your salvation. To purchase it, Christ came, and obeyed, and suffered, and died. To bestow it, He rose again, and is now exalted in heaven, having on His shoulder that government which He constituted by His assuming our nature, by His perfecting in righteousness the work which His Father gave Him to do. Now, observe, we entreat you, one other part of the government of Christ. It is, that the Gospel of His grace, setting forth to you the way of salvation, containing His offers and promises, is addressed unto you personally. His willingness to receive and to bless you is there set forth. His power to redeem, to renew your soul, and to bestow upon it spiritual life, to prepare it for, and bring it into everlasting glory, is there abundantly made known to you. The eternal danger, the absolute and eternal ruin you incur by neglecting so great salvation, is clearly set before you. What, then, my friends, what is your wisdom, what is your duty, what is your benefit and greatest privilege now? It is to come to Christ, to submit to His gracious government, to seek His great salvation. "Kiss ye the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from

the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in *Him*."

To all those, whatever be their state or condition of soul, in their own estimation, but who are really awakened to a sense of their danger, in consequence of the sin which they feel to be in them, the doctrine of our text is calculated to afford the most abundant consolation and hope. It is the foundation on which true hope must be built, that this government of Christ is committed unto *Him* for the express purpose of saving just such persons as you now feel and confess yourselves to be. It was ordained in the abundant mercy and loving kindness of the Godhead in three persons. That very attribute of Deity of which you feel peculiar need, situated now as you feel yourselves to be, is in this government of Christ fully brought to light and placed before you in most affecting and expressive manifestation. And it is so made manifest as to show to you, that all the other attributes of God also are reconciled with His mercy and grace. His own wisdom devised this way, when none other could have sufficed. His love was such, that He spared not His Son; and the love of the Son was such that He spared not Himself. Now, consider, for what end was all this accomplished? Just for that end, which now you truly need, that

your soul might be saved. This, of itself, might give to you encouragement and boldness to come unto Christ,—and an assurance, that in doing so, you were obeying the will of God. But there is much more than this to encourage you. You have the express commandment of Christ Himself—"Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You have His word and promise of truth pledged to you, that coming unto Him you shall in no wise be cast out. Remember, too, that in every deed of His life upon earth, He shews you the plan of his active government in behalf of sinners,—His unfailing readiness to give relief and deliverance; His almighty power to effect that deliverance for you, whatever your state of soul may be; and the power of His divine word to subdue every evil, and every enemy. It is on His shoulder that the government is, and what more than this, as the constitution of the kingdom of grace, could your soul desire from God? What better terms would your utmost wishes demand? We repress the thought! for you would never have sought for any, you would never have heard of salvation, had not the government been with Jesus Christ the Lord, constituted in Him and made perfect, in free and sovereign grace for the very chief of sinners. Consider Him, the great High Priest of your profession,—the testimonies which He has given of His willingness

and power to save; the evidence He hath left on record, that nothing, in the way of forgiving sin, or of healing spiritual maladies, is too hard for His arm to achieve,—and nothing too hard for *Him*, in preparing the soul for heaven. In Him, all fulness dwells—it is committed unto Him, for the exercise of His government; for so it pleased the Father. Remember that His commandment to you is, that you should seek; and His promise, that seeking ye shall find. Remember He gives you no encouragement to inactivity or slothfulness, in the matters which concern your everlasting peace. His will is, that you should be up and doing, waiting upon Him; and for this end He has supplied you with means, of His own appointment. You will not prosper in your spiritual condition by remaining away from Him, or by raising to yourselves stumbling blocks of doubt, and questions, and fears; but come, and wait upon Him. You will not prosper, in merely lamenting, and saying in affected humility—I am unworthy of His favour,—undeserving of His compassion and love. In one word, *you are* unworthy, more unworthy than yet you have perceived, and while you strive to render yourself worthy of His favour and grace,—you are rebelling against His government, and sinning against your own soul. It is in Himself that all the worthiness lies. *His* grace and power alone can alter and change your

condition of soul, and raise you up from your state of spiritual death, to live to His glory and praise. Seek knowledge of Him; and seek it by His Spirit to be given unto you, and to dwell with you, guiding your mind into the knowledge of all truth. Your own natural power will not carry you onward in the acquiring of true spiritual knowledge. O remember that a special part of this gracious government, is, the ministration of the Holy Spirit to dwell with the soul,—that Spirit is one with Christ in executing His government for your salvation. Wait upon Him; and the Spirit shall come and dwell with *you;* and He will be unto you, according to the promise of Christ, the Comforter to establish your soul in the faith and obedience of Christ, and in victory over sin. But let us view farther this government of Christ in the great ends of its establishment,—the salvation of sinners, and the glory of God. Consider these ends. And in the first place, consider what we have been seeking to show,—according to the Scriptures of truth, that the salvation of sinners is the end and purpose of God in all things here below. Now, in this aspect of the government of Christ, the salvation of each individual soul must be specially precious in His sight. His whole church on earth is made up of individuals as you are; sinful and guilty and perishing in themselves. Your case personally, then, cannot

escape His regard. His eye is upon you. His care and His government are exercised in your very behalf, when you truly seek Him; and if you have not hitherto done so; strive to seek Him and His salvation *now*. His omniscience as God reaches to your inmost feeling, and His sympathy as man, to your utmost distresses and evils. The salvation of the soul is precious in His sight; and if it have indeed become precious in your view,—consider, that in His view, it is still more precious. He knows and feels its eternal value a thousand fold more than you have yet apprehended it. You may come to Him with spiritual boldness and courage, believing that truly He careth for you. And then, what a comforting view may not this government of Christ give to the believer, in all the vicissitudes, and changes and trials of this created world,—this temporary state of existence. It is but the nursery for heaven to the people of God. It has indeed been polluted by Satan and sin —it is filled with spiritual disease, and contagion, and death. But the government of Christ renders it safe,—and all His people shall obtain the victory over its miseries, its temptations, its cares, and its sorrows. There is not one circumstance in your lot, which is not ordained and arranged in the foreknowledge, in the wisdom and faithfulness of Christ your Redeemer. He hath all power in heaven and on earth committed into His hands;

and whatever be your state or lot here, it is the effect of His wise and faithful determination regarding you. Of any thing in your lot He cannot be ignorant—He is Himself the governor who ordains it. Your lot may be adverse,—it may be a scene of pain and of sorrow: your own sinfulness has produced a necessity for it; but do not arraign the wisdom of Heaven; and in your utmost distresses, despair not of His timeous deliverance and aid. His love and His wisdom place you under a course of training and discipline. You have clung to your idols,—He will make them bitter unto you. He will bring you to learn their vanity and their evil,—yea, He will take vengeance of your inventions, while He takes away in His loving-kindness all their guilt from your soul; and all their polluting influence from your soul's inmost affections. And is prosperity your lot? Then, be not high-minded, but fear. See that it lead you not to forget the government of Christ,—that all your gifts and all your enjoyments are His by right, and yours only in tenure of frailty. See that they exclude not Him from His place in your soul,—that you be not led astray from your allegiance to Him, in the multitude of His blessings bestowed upon you. Consider yourself as but the steward of His bounty,—the occupier of His talents,—and see that you make them produce interest to His glory on earth. And whatever

be your lot, it is still the lot of *His* appointment on whose shoulder the government is. His end and object are the glory of God in the salvation of immortal souls.

Are you, my friends, personally, co-operating with Him? Do you seek the promotion of this end? Or if not, where is the evidence, that you are yet reconciled to the plan of His government,—that you are indeed the friends of Christ? Hath He not placed you in situations on earth, where every one of you is called in your own station and place, to be aiding to the cause of His glory around you? Have you influence and authority? Do you exercise them for the glory of God, or are you careless whether He be glorified by you or not? Has your example effect with others? See that you study your conversation and walk. Do these give countenance to indifference about God and salvation; or do they show that you heed them, as that which indeed is precious? Are you parents,—and has God, has Christ in His government bestowed children upon you—entrusting their souls to your care! Do you bring them up to the Lord;—do you seek them to serve Him? Do you show and teach them the nature, the value, the glory of His eternal salvation and kingdom? O, if not, how can we place you in the class of His friends? Consider, ye parents of children, the government un-

der which now you live, and to which you must render account. O, consider the preciousness of the trust committed into your hands,—immortal souls whom Christ invites you to bring unto Him, and to forbid them not. How severe is the punishment inflicted by temporal governments, on those who instruct its subjects to rebel against its authority, and to break through its laws! And how fearful must be the sentence of Heaven, in the solemn day of accounts, against those, who bring up their children for Mammon, and sacrifice not only their perishing bodies, but their immortal souls to the god of this world,—neglecting utterly their culture for God and for heaven. I proclaim to you, ye careless parents, who permit your children to grow up around you, thoughtless and careless of God,—that in many generations yet unborn, *your* guilt shall be written in the blood of perishing, godless, graceless souls, going down to destruction; and that if *your own* wretched lot be *hell*, every new arrival there of a ruined descendant of yours, will be a new load of guilt added to your condemnation,—to sink you deeper and deeper, in its flames of everlasting torment. It is an overwhelming thought! to stand responsible to the government of Christ for a ruined soul, which He hath placed with you, in the most near, and tender, and endearing connection. Argue not the purpose of God. You have now given you the means of God, and the promises of

His grace,—that He will bless your instructions and sanctify all your care of your children's souls. *Consider*, that He who gives you now every encouragement, shall call you soon to account. And ye parents, who feel the importance of your trust, pray earnestly to the Lord, that His grace would keep you ever mindful of this,—the *souls* of your children. Faint not, and be not discouraged, at your present want of desired success. Remember that the government is Christ's, and that the means are yours. And in the conduct of Christ's government here—we know not if there be one lesson more clearly and marvellously brought to light, to demonstrate His faithfulness on the earth, than those who at late, and to us unlikely periods, were yet aroused by remembering the care and instruction of parents, these coming to their hearts and conscience, with power from God,—to call them back from the paths of sin and of ruin, and to turn their faces to heaven. Commit you the means to the government of Christ,—the seed of the word, to the soil of the mind, while yet it is meet to receive it, and to imbibe instruction. Should you water it with your tears, restrain not your hand in the husbandry. God giveth the increase. And surely the people of God who are parents, have deeply to consider the government of Christ, in giving unto them this special department in His kingdom on earth. We cannot enforce it with

sufficient earnestness, for its importance is of eternal amount. And if there be one means more than another, in the visible church on earth, which hinders the progress of the spiritual reign of Christ in the souls of men, it is the carelessness of parents, in neglecting their children's moral and religious culture.

The doctrine of our text, extends in its practical results to every relation, to every condition, and to every duty of life. Christ has made known to us what His government is. He came, and tabernacled among men,—to make manifest His own character and His will. He left us an example, that we might follow His steps. He who bears the government on His shoulder, took also upon Him the yoke of obedience, in our very likeness and nature,—that we might behold the way, in which He commands us to walk, and unto which He calls us by His grace. The *only perfect* example of every virtue, and of every grace, was displayed in His character and life on the earth. He now is the same in heaven, and He offers unto you grace, to conform you to His image. Every act of disobedience to His rule and example, is an act of rebellion against His government. Every act of neglect towards God,—every act of injustice, of fraud, of dishonesty to man, is, an act which His soul abhors, and which His justice shall punish,—if unrepented of,—if

persisted in. Every transaction in which the law of His government, the golden rule,—the law of love to our neighbour, is forgotten, is an act of dishonour done to Him,—in which His counsel is rejected, and His authority despised. The law of His government is the law of love to the children of men. To this, all His people on earth are commanded, invited, intreated to be obedient; and His own gracious power offered, to implant in your souls the principles of obedience, and to minister unto you strength, to render yours a growing obedience,—onwards continually towards perfection. Now, a realizing continually in your minds of the government of Christ, is the means of your advancement. Without this you cannot advance in godliness, in purity, in consistent and upright, and unblameable conduct of life. Seek to behold Him,—to live habitually, and truly, in your practice, under His government and guidance. His eye and His strengthening arm are towards you for your good. Let your waiting eyes be directed to Him, as the hills whence your strength will come, and your safety. He will lead you in the paths of righteousness and of peace. *He* will separate you from the power of evil. He will incline you by His good Spirit to that which *is* good, and will prevent iniquity from obtaining dominion over you. His object is your eternal

happiness with Himself where He now is. Listen therefore to His counsels of love,—lay hold of His offered grace. The time is drawing near, when you must stand for judgment before Him; and to receive your eternal and unchangeable lot. Are you now prepared for heaven? O, seek the preparation from Him; that He may establish, strengthen, comfort you, upholding you and delivering your soul from every adversity, from every spiritual enemy and danger. He will perfect regarding you, the scheme and end of His gracious government; and will bring you into His kingdom, where His people shall reign with Him, being made kings and priests unto God.

SERMON XVII.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

And His name shall be called Wonderful.

IN ancient times, it is well known, that names bestowed upon individuals were expressive of some particular feature in their character, some particular deeds or events of their life, or some purpose or end for which they were destined. Such names and titles were given both beforehand, in anticipation of what was expected or hoped regarding the individual; or afterwards, when their history was completed, or certain events of their life fulfilled. Such an ascription or use of names and titles, accords with certain states and stages of society, in its progress through succeeding gradations of change, onwards to settlement and consistency of form. In such incipient stages, the changes themselves are more remarkable than the other features and qualities of society, and the

actors or doers being less numerous, a greater share of passing events becomes connected with them individually; they themselves become more prominent in the scene of action, and their individual sharing in events more cognizable by every observer. Such names are frequently given, as recorded in scripture, under the immediate direction or inspiration of God Himself. And God takes to Himself, when revealed to men, such names and titles as express certain of the attributes of His character, or which remind His people of certain events brought to pass by the exercise of His power, and of His almighty superintendence over the affairs of men. The names or titles ascribed to Christ in our text and context, denote the infinite grandeur of His person, His divine and eternal perfections, and also the incomparable, unrivalled glory of His doings, and of His personal government. And while both these demand continually, in practice, the true Christian's attention, and reverence, and love; it is useful and necessary to every believer in Christ, to have clear, comprehensive, and accurate views, separately, both of the glory and majesty of Christ in His own person and character essentially, and also of the majesty and glory, the excellency and the meetness to our own individual state and circumstances of that divine and gracious government, which, as the Mediator between God and His people, He

unceasingly exercises for their immediate benefit, and for securing unto them their ultimate, everlasting salvation.

The name ascribed to Christ, in the words of our text, applies equally to His person, essentially considered, and to His government practically viewed. His very existence, in the character and place and offices of a Saviour to sinners, of all wonders, is the most stupendous and adorable. But in entering upon this subject, which it becomes us to do with humility, with distrust and diffidence of every ability in ourselves to comprehend it aright; we must, initially, recall to your remembrance what we were anxious to bring before you, in addressing you formerly from the words preceding those of our text; namely, the difference there is, between an inquiry into, or a knowledge of certain facts, and any finding out or discovering of the primary causes of such facts, or the attempting any elucidation of the process by which they come out and stand forth to our view, as substantial, real, matters of fact in themselves. Nothing, for instance, can be more apparent to our consciousness and our senses, than that we live and move, and have a vital being. This is a matter of fact; but when we attempt to make inquiry into the nature of the vital principle which is in us, or even its mode of operation, all our curiosity and all our inquiry are in a moment

a rrested in any progress they seek to make towards discovery. Nor do we believe that with respect to this very thing, greatly as we venerate and applaud the reasonings and the researches of men, that the most learned and profound of them all, has ever yet gone beyond the limit of the Psalmist's knowledge, rather indeed of his confessed and modest insufficiency, when he exclaimed, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are *thy* works; and that my soul knoweth right well." And where is the object in the whole compass of nature, from the most stupendous to the most minute, but presents the same inscrutable wonders to the eye of the inquiring and intelligent mind? The visible, sensible, properties of such objects, we can, as it were, handle, discuss, and reason regarding them; and they are truly wonderful, even these properties, the more they are searched and examined. But how they came to be what they are, how they are sustained and kept what they are, the whole mode of their being, is to us altogether beyond the reach of our vision and knowledge; the being of them, itself, is set before us, and it is subject of wonder unceasing to those who most can ponder it. It is a *great acquirement* to learn true modesty of mind, to learn how little, how weak, how frail, and how feeble we are.

Now, we deem, that the great essential facts, yea, that every fact on which Christianity is found-

ed, is entitled to the same mode of treatment which we are *constrained* to give to other objects around us. All Christianity is founded on the facts implied in the name, so divinely appropriate, given to Christ in our text,—that great mystery of godliness, "God was manifest in the flesh." Here we behold the greatest mystery. It is stupendously, unspeakably, incomparably wonderful; and hence, in part, the name ascribed to Christ, in the words of our text. We pretend not to *explain* this impenetrable mystery, or His Godhead, or His intimate relation to the Father as a Son. But we take the fact:—we know that He appeared, we know that He *was* manifested in the flesh, "justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." We know that on earth He proved Himself to be the Son of God with power. Well might He say Himself, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." Are we to suspend our belief, or purposely to withhold it, till we can unravel all the eternal mysteries of His wonderful being? In common reason, we deem, that each one of us might just as well suspend or withhold belief that we are living sentient beings ourselves, till we had unravelled all the mysteries of our own being; or suspend belief in the existence itself of objects

around us, till we had demonstrated all the secrets of their constitution, and all their modes, their various aspects and classes and forms, how produced, and how maintained in all the respective functions which they discharge in the places they occupy. But there is another mystery, another wonder, connected with this subject, which every unbelieving mind would do well solemnly to consider,—how it is, that the mind is so slow to believe, so unwilling, or if you dispute the actual unwillingness, so incapable of believing, or so unprepared to believe and receive the wonderful things of God and of Christ. Is it a fact, with respect to any one in our hearing, that such is your state? It is a fact which must have its cause. You receive testimony upon every other subject; and how feeble, how imperfect the testimony in instances without number, in which still you consider yourselves perfectly entitled, nay, loudly called upon to act, when your temporal interests are at stake, yea, in which indeed it were folly you should not act. Why not act, with respect to God, to Christ, and to His great salvation? You do not believe that your interests here are so much, and so immediately concerned. You say you cannot believe. We take that as a fact. And while, if left to our own unaided reason we might indeed, and would be, altogether incapable of finding out, or of stating to *you*, the *cause* of that fact in your mind's constitution and history; yet the testimony

of God unfolds the cause. There is a moral or rather a spiritual disease of the mind, alienation of the mind and heart from God, and from all spiritual objects, there is, through sin, an absolute unwillingness induced. The operation of that spiritual malady, we may, as rational beings, discover in our own hearts ; and thereby we may prove the truth, the eternal truth of the scriptures. We may have the most palpable evidence of their truth placed within the sphere of our personal knowledge in the household of our own mind. It would be wonderful, such persons may say, if we felt ourselves truly believing and truly receiving all that the Scripture unfolds. We acknowledge it would. Christ is called "Wonderful" here. Seek unto Him, and the wonder in you shall yet be accomplished, in your personal, your rational, your sensible experience. *Do not* tell us that there is contradiction in terms in the counsel we offer, that you should come unto Him, or wait upon Him, while you feel that in Him you do not really and truly believe. There is here no contradiction ; for well must you know, that in temporal matters, you act upon the very strength of a single "*If*" in your favour.

Here, then, do the same. We ask no more. We ask what is just and rational. Seek to God for instruction, for power ; *if* peradventure, all these solemn realities be true,—for even, conceding all,—yet even *if* they be true, their

importance to you is eternal; and the voice of reason demands for them the most immediate, the most heedful attention and care. And seeking, assuredly you shall find. To you, if indeed, you be in our hearing, who say you cannot believe—we would say in return—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God,"—if now, you seek solemnly and earnestly, and perseveringly instruction, and teaching, and power from God Himself, for the work is of Him, as a gracious God in Christ, of which you stand in need: seek unto Him, and wait upon Him, asking Him to perform it.

And we cannot dismiss this part of our subject, without demanding from you whom we now address, examination of your own mind and its habits, in one particular. Whether have you spent more time,—bestowed more attention in seeking hitherto instruction and power from God,—or in trying to combat the evidences for the truth and reality of all that is Christian and spiritual?—If you have spent more time,—bestowed more labour upon the latter than on the former,—then, there is evidence that there is some secret bias with you, not in favour of, but against the doctrines and facts of the Scriptures—however much you may yet have escaped discovering it. We can perceive no *harm* whatever, in any possible sense, that an unbeliever should become a believer. Seek, then, to become one. Wait upon God, in sup-

plication and earnest prayer, that He would communicate the power unto you. But if you do not so wait upon God, we do shut you up, to the observation of this wonderful fact, in your own mind, and constitution, and character, that you are really unwilling to believe,—when perhaps, too, you confess it were well, it were better that you *should believe*. What is the cause of this fact?—for we apprehend, that deny it you cannot, if you refuse to wait upon God. It must be some principle implanted within you, which is contrary to God, and averse from submission to Him. And we leave it with you to say, whether it be *wise* to indulge it? And once more we repeat it, that this principle we speak of is original sin—and its fruits in the soul; mysterious, indeed, and wonderful in its transmission to you, and in all its working; but still observable in the *facts* of its working; and conquerable in you alone, by Him whose name is Wonderful, and who came from heaven to rescue perishing sinners from the condemnation, and guilt, and power of that very principle of evil, and of all its bitter fruits of a practical disobedience. He is Wonderful still. And as He came from heaven to earth to seek and to save that which was lost, He is now exalted in heaven, to forward the same purpose of wonderful power and love. Come unto Him; and He will give you the victory over this power and working of spirit-

ual evil. He will enable you yet, to experience in your soul, and to acknowledge in your life, and at your death, and throughout eternity, that of all names belonging to Christ, in His person, and mission, His purpose, and His work, the name given Him in our text is *most appropriate*, to be ascribed to *Him*, from whom all His people feel and know that they receive every benefit.

But we proceed to observe more particularly, that the name here given to Christ, is applicable to Him in His glorious person,—and that, not only as He is essentially God, but as He is God and man. Into the mystery of His existence in Himself, as God, we cannot travel far;—our minds are too feeble, weak, and limited, to form just views of His glory and greatness, suitable to the subject. We are called upon to adore Him, as possessing essentially in Himself as God, all the divine attributes, "In His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." The fulness and perfection of all these attributes belong to Christ. He has them in full and infinite, and unchangeable perfection. If there be any thing in one or all of those attributes worthy of our reverence, our respect, love, and attachment, then, how much is due to *Him*, in whom all of them are centred unchangeably and fully. We are constrained, and we feel it no constraint, but a willing tribute rightly due, to admire any exhib-

ition of such moral qualities in our fellow-creatures: and yet, the very highest exhibitions of them that mere humanity can give, are but faint, and imperfect, and poor, indeed, compared with the fulness, the everlasting fulness of them, abiding unchangeably in Christ Jesus the Lord. As the heavens are high above the earth, so is He high above all created beings, and in the possession and exercise of all that is truly good, and excellent, and adorable. In His attributes He is wonderful. But while this name is given to Christ,—while it applies to Him, as He is in Himself God, we have to remember, that the name Wonderful rightly applies to Him also, in His having brought the exhibition of those glorious perfections of His, down into the sphere of our positive observation. In heaven, He possessed them from all eternity: on earth, He manifested them, by their exercise in the presence of men. His infinite wisdom He made manifest, in the knowledge which He possessed of all things, and especially of men,—of their character, their hearts, their thoughts, and their purposes. Do we not see, that at every stage of His life, in every circumstance,—all these lay open before Him,—"He needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man." How clearly, even in this respect, did Christ shew that He was God and not man! But it was not in this way only, that He shewed the

wisdom of God exercised by Him on earth. The doctrines which He taught and inculcated,—these shew forth His wisdom. Every word that He uttered has on it the stamp of Deity. *His* doctrines are not the result of human speculation, and ingenuity, and research: they are above man, and above his utmost skill, the utmost reach of man's wisdom to have discovered,—both the doctrines, the announcements, the precepts of Christ, manifest forth His infinite wisdom; and as they are wise, so they are also good: as they are pure and holy, so are they also profitable, and suited to men, with regard to their interests here, and their eternal prospects in a world to come. And surely, if His wisdom was thus manifested, so was also His power in all the works that he wrought. None of these were works of man. They were works of God. And the name Wonderful was applicable to Christ in His performing of all of them. To attempt any enumeration of the miracles of Christ would exceed our limits now. But we observe regarding them all, that they show forth His glory and divine power, the more they are examined. Each, by itself, is of such a nature, as to make it distinct, and separate from, and infinitely above what all the power of men could achieve. Christ might thus well be called Wonderful, in His power, and in bringing the exercise of that power within the reach of our observation, in His

personal doings,—showing us manifestly and clearly, that He can exercise it respecting us, in every state and condition of ours;—that while His wisdom reaches to the most intimate cognizance of us all, His power extends to the working of all things necessary for our present and our eternal good. Christ appeared Wonderful in His holiness: in His entire separation from sinners and from sin—in His perfect, and full, and glorious distance from every thing that was contrary to the law of God: *His* whole life was a perfect transcript of the law and commandments of God—practically exhibited, throughout His whole life upon earth. This, we are aware, strikes not at first sight, so forcibly as it might, the readers of the Gospel history. But on closer examination, and *the more* closely examined, the more may we perceive, that the Holiness of Christ, the divine purity of His whole life, shines forth in visible demonstration: actuated as He was, in all things, by motives of love to God, and of love to man, with no purpose of selfishness, or of worldliness like man. He was Wonderful in His holiness;—demonstrating unto us visibly that attribute of the Godhead, and setting before us, by practical exhibition, what God would have us to be, in all manner of conversation and life, in heart, and in conduct. He is "*Wonderful*" here, because all finite beings could never have shown this pattern

of holiness, and of purity, and in their own name, or strength, or authority, as was done by Christ. The justice, also, of Christ, residing as an attribute of Deity in Him, He practically exhibited. As He showed forth His holiness, in a perfect and full obedience of the divine law, so He showed forth His justice, in yielding submission to the punishment it threatened against sin. He came and lived upon earth, as the surety of sinners. The whole tenor of His life, in fulfilling the law, was a demonstration of His justice: and yet more especially His sufferings and His death, in enduring the inflictions of the anger and wrath of God against sin, in His body and soul. In this He was Wonderful indeed. His love of justice—even the justice of God in demanding the punishment of sin, was fully exhibited, in the readiness, the willingness, the perfect submission which he showed, when he laid down His life for His people. And the divine goodness, also, of God, by Christ was manifested, in His acts and works of mercy, compassion, and love, to the souls and bodies of men. He went about continually doing good. He showed that the goodness of God was infinite, wonderful truly, exercised towards the most sinful, and the most undeserving. In all His works of mercy, compassion, and grace, He sets before us by a living demonstration, the goodness residing in God,—the existence in the

eternal mind of that glorious, and to us precious attribute, who stand so deeply and wholly in need of its exercise. We are prone to measure the goodness of God by our own ideas of what it is likely to be: we have our own vague preconceptions upon the subject: the thoughtless and careless sinner,—the hardened and unbelieving offender will sometimes think—if there be a God, that there is goodness and nothing else in Him,—that there is no risk of his not experiencing it. The awakened and trembling sinner will be ready to judge, that the goodness of God cannot extend unto *him*. But Christ, who is Wonderful, shows us the measure of the goodness of God,—that it is infinite indeed, and ready to be extended to the very chief of sinners, to every inquiring, to every penitent, to every returning soul, to every humbled suppliant for mercy:—*none* of whom, whatever their character previously was, whatever their state or circumstances, did He put away from Him unsatisfied, or without partaking and experiencing His goodness: while He also makes manifest, that God is just,—and that sinners destroy themselves, by not seeking unto *Him* for the exercise of this goodness towards them;—that the justice of God will for ever condemn those to whom this goodness is offered, and who will refuse to submit to it, or to seek its bounties from His gracious hands. The goodness manifested by Christ in His life, renders Him wonder-

ful; and that goodness of His forms ground of encouragement to every sinner, now to seek unto God:—it gives them ground of assurance, that they shall not be sent empty away, or without deliverance from those evils which destroy their souls. And the unspeakable goodness of Christ,—the stupendous wonders of His everlasting love to sinners are set before us in the scene of His sufferings and His death,—these bring before us the everlasting goodness of God towards guilty and perishing sinners:—He is wonderful, in His providing such a redemption, which any wisdom but *His* could never have ordered; to which human thought could never have reached, even to imagine it; but which is now clearly made manifest by Christ, in all His deeds of wonder done to the sinful children of men.

Doubtless, the great wonder of redemption is, that love of God, in which He determined to save sinners; and that, when there was none other way in which to maintain the honour of His eternal government, and at the same time to ensure the salvation of guilty men, He spared not His beloved Son, the brightness of His own glory, and the express image of His person; and that the Son, in the exercise of a love and power equal to those of the Father, consented to become their surety, and a sacrifice for them,—to humble Himself into our nature and likeness,

uniting these with His glorious and eternal divinity of person, and condescending to tabernacle on the earth with men for a season. In all this, there are wonders unspeakable; and in His own person, Christ is thus wonderful, in the highest, the most significant sense of the term. It is a subject too high for finite minds, thoroughly to comprehend in all its nature, in the nature of the union subsisting thus between the divinity and the human person of Christ; though the *fact* of this subsistence is made known to us so clearly, that he who runneth may read it. And it is manifest, that the Scriptures encourage not nor commend any indulgence of vain speculations and theories upon the subject. And even in our own times, when men boasting of their mental strength, and vain of what they at least fancied to be their own wisdom and their spiritual acquirements and knowledge, have ventured to search into this mystery, they have been made manifest, as utterers of gross delusions, if not of direct blasphemy, concerning the Son of God. It has been already, we believe, and justly enough remarked on this subject, that Christ Himself in His appearances to saints of old, previously to His personal dwelling on earth, reproved their curiosity, on the subject of knowing His name. And when the Apostle John is favoured with a view of his glorified and exalted Redeemer, he says concerning Him, that He had a name written

which no one knew but He Himself. But Christ also gives to His people the most cheering and pleasing encouragements to believe, that what they know not now, they shall know hereafter; and we are not left to doubt, that in the kingdom of glory, when the saints come to its full and perfect enjoyment, their souls shall receive the fullest satisfaction and happiness, in beholding, in understanding, and contemplating with enlarged, purified, and sanctified powers of mind, the wonders of redeeming love. "For now," says an apostle, "we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." We have now to do with the wonders which stand revealed in the person of Christ, in the attested facts of His wonderful character, and His gracious doings. We have now, to come unto Him, as He is made known to us, and freely offered: and in contemplating His wonderful name, well may the believer exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" It is by having clear views of the wonders of Christ's glorious person, as God manifest in the flesh, that the believer can experience and enjoy true consolation and comfort, as well as encouragement to press forward in his heavenly calling, and in the arduous course of his spiritual

warfare. Christ the Son of God, the equal of the Father, is made like unto His brethren, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." It is in the very compass of this wonderful fact, that the believer's ground of comfort is placed,—of his everlasting safety, and of all his spiritual strength. It was as the surety of sinners Christ thus condescended to dwell on earth,—that He might work out for sinners everlasting redemption. Herein is the love of God manifested. Where could our hope be, where could we have it, without this visible manifestation of the glory and of the goodness, the mercy and love of God! But here, there is abundant room for encouragement. Do you feel yourselves to be guilty and rebellious, and therefore perishing, sinners? "Look unto me," says Christ, "all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." Consider, in my person, what God is manifested as willing to do towards you. Behold it in me,—in my appearance on earth—in all my character, in all my acts, in all my wonders wrought, and in all my sufferings. Christ calls thus upon every one of you to look unto Him—and to see, that in Him the work of salvation is prepared, completed, perfected, and that, for your personal deliverance. Consider then, His works as performed by Him, in His wonderful, His adorable person,—receive into your minds sound

and becoming views of them, as indications of the will of God towards you. We mean here, especially, the wonderful works done by Christ, in His active life upon earth, and done to sinners as you are. They are done and recorded for encouragement to you to come to Him, and to place your confidence in Him; they are done, to make evident before you, that God is gracious:—O, consider them not as the works of a mere man, of a changeable being,—they are the deeds of an unchangeable God; and the subject of wonder is, that they should have been so performed;—that God should have so humbled Himself for the purpose of manifesting to you His grace and His love, to afford you strong consolation and hope; and to assure your hearts, that His divine strength, who is wonderful in His working, shall be imparted unto you, and that in such measure as will convert, sanctify, preserve your soul, unto eternal salvation,—enabling you to overcome every enemy, and to grow in spiritual strength, and wisdom, and knowledge. To grow in all the powers of spiritual life, you must grow first in knowledge of Christ; and you must consider His wonderful name, in spiritual enlightening of your mind. Believe it, my friends, without this there can be no true advancement in actual, personal Christianity; and the more *He* is contemplated, the more wonderful shall you see Him to be, in the object, the gracious

object and end of His government, the manner of His constituting it, to be established for ever, for the salvation of souls. You read in the Gospel His wonders done, to the minds as well as to the bodies of men. You feel that your mind requires to be changed,—to be visited with power, that you might live in view and observation, and remembrance, and faith of Christ. He is able and willing to communicate this grace to you. What He was on earth, He now is in heaven. And as evidently as He then was, and now is, Wonderful, He has made His calls and His invitations known to you, inviting you to come unto Him, and to experience in your own soul, His wonderful power and grace, transforming you by the renewing of your mind, and enabling you to know Him, and to repose in Him, filial and unlimited confidence, for every blessing of which you stand in need. But the name of Christ is also wonderful, in the nature and effects of that grace which is with Him, for the salvation of sinners. This grace in its nature is free and sovereign; and what we mean by its being a free grace, is, its being exercised towards those who are altogether in themselves undeserving of it; and, moreover, who, by receiving it, cannot bring profit or accession of essential happiness and glory to Christ, as He is God over all, and blessed for ever. Finite beings, at least we, in our low and earthly condition are unable, by

constitution of mind to exercise love or favour, or active regard to beings or individuals around us, in whom we can perceive nothing amiable or good, or worthy, and nothing profitable. When one becomes destitute of all and every quality, that could commend him, and also of every quality that could render him serviceable to society, or in the world,—when one becomes not only destitute of every moral recommendation, but positively and absolutely the enemy of the society in which he lives, the disturber and destroyer of its peace and well-being in every respect,—we cannot but feel, naturally, dislike and aversion to such a being; and we cannot but desire, that such unworthiness should be visited with at least power to restrain its working, and to preserve from its evil effects the interests of humanity around us. It is true we might feel movements of pity towards such a fallen and degraded being; but we would hesitate, surely, in considering such a one as the object on which we should choose to bestow all the benefits of an actual munificence,—all the liberality of our aid, and assistance, all the exercises of favour and love. In point of fact, we could not, humanly speaking, cherish favour and love towards such a being, as the spontaneous working of our mind toward him. And more especially, if all the efforts of such a misguided and mischievous being, whose object it was to

do what evil he could, in every sense of the term,—if all his efforts were specially directed against ourselves personally,—to do us wrong, to injure, to rob, to revile us, and to deprive us of whatever was justly and righteously due to us;—how, naturally, could we look upon such a character, but with resentment and wrath? Yet, in all such respects, did every sinner of mankind appear to Christ,—in every respect we have noticed, they acted against Him as God—refusing to obey or to serve Him—denying His rule over them, and seeking to dishonour Him continually—displaying, as rebellious creatures in His own world, principles and conduct of enmity against Him; and active, alone in dishonouring, despising, and rebelling against, His supremacy and His government;—degraded by sin, by its introduction into their nature,—it obtaining power and ascendency there—degraded into a state of character, in which nothing was presented to the holy, omniscient eye of God in all their mind, and heart, and soul, but what was contrary to His will, and law, and image. Yet it was then, that He exercised towards them grace, compassion and redeeming love; it was then, that Christ, whose name is Wonderful, consented to become their surety; and to work out for them at the cost of all His humiliation and sufferings and anguish, and death, eternal salvation; and to bestow it upon *such*

sinners,—to rescue them from their guilty, polluted, and fallen estate, and to make them partakers with Himself, and with His Father in heaven, of eternal and unspeakable glory. And let us remember here, that His redeemed, at their best estate, in their glorified condition, cannot bring any accession of essential glory or happiness to God: in other words, to speak after the manner of men, God cannot be benefited by *their* salvation, and by their everlasting happiness—the benefit is *theirs*. The grace that was manifested is therefore wonderful indeed, it is subject of everlasting wonder and praise, to all the people of God. It is, we are expressly informed in Scripture, subject of wonder to the angels in heaven. The exercise of this grace, is the very business of the mission of Christ to earth,—of all the deeds He wrought,—of all the sufferings He endured,—of all the works of grace He yet performs in the salvation of sinners. "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." This is grace, compassion, love, which pass all knowledge: all we can say regarding it, cannot describe its extent, its height, and its depth,—we can only say that it is "Wonderful." But this we can say, that surely a believing view of this grace, which is in Jesus Christ, manifested by Him, to rebellious, degraded, and unworthy sinners, demands

that those who know Christ should love Him, not only for what He is to them, but for what He is in Himself,—in His own glorious perfections; and in the attribute of grace and love towards sinners of our own fallen race. And let it be clearly understood by each one of you in our hearing now, that if your minds be truly and spiritually enlightened to behold the character—the glory of Christ,—the wonders of His redeeming love, and of His finished work,—you must experience, and in no doubtful measure—love, reverence, and regard to Him, for what He is in Himself. And it is in having competent views of Him, as possessing such an attribute as the love which He manifested,—when every circumstance of our fallen estate, rendered it unlikely, to our view, that God could have looked upon us in mercy at all,—it is this which will bring confidence, consolation, and hope, to the troubled mind, to the convinced sinner; and too largely that confidence in Christ cannot be exercised, when springing from a knowledge of His character, of His divine and eternal love; and when such a view of *Him* is found leading the soul from sin to God, turning it from the love of sin—from the habits and practice of sin, and inclining the soul to follow after the Lord, in the way of His holy commandments. We dishonour this Wonderful Saviour, by not confiding in Him. But His grace and

love to sinners are also wonderful, in the effects produced by them, in the mind and soul of those who are saved. To bring sinners back from sin to God, is a work of marvellous difficulty and amount. In all the constitution of God's moral government, known to us, it is a work the greatest that the power and wisdom of God have achieved,—the most wonderful of all His doings, —that guilty, condemned, sinners should be set free from the sentence of condemnation, and brought into a state of acceptance and favour with God, and made partakers of His own nature and image again, in this life, and the heirs of His glory in the life to come. The accomplishment of this, in consistency with the glory of God, and in consistency with His everlasting hatred of sin,—this is wonderful. Christ hath wrought and effected this,—He hath opened and perfected the way in which all this is accomplished, by all His doings and sufferings, as we have been already endeavouring to show.

But we have to consider the effect of this grace, in every individual separately: O! my brethren, our profitable study were, to behold, to know, and to experience it in ourselves; and to know of a truth, that this grace which is in Christ Jesus, is vouchsafed unto *us*, and worketh effectually in us, to the glory of God, and our own everlasting peace. The effects of this grace are wonderful in every respect. They are won-

derful in their commencement,—turning the mind to the contemplation of spiritual truths and objects. Whenever the mind, formerly careless and unconcerned, and indifferent, about all that is spiritual and eternal, and holy, is turned to make such things the subjects of its habitual reflection:—this is grace,—it is the putting forth of divine power, in a wonderful manner, by the hand of the Spirit of God, who works as one with Christ, in the conversion of souls. We have to view such an effect, as grace descending from Christ, in His actual and personal rule and government in heaven, and taking possession in the soul for Himself. This very initial change in the work of conversion to God is of itself a wonder. All human skill, and power, and wisdom, and might, cannot do it,—cannot accomplish any one iota of all this effect in the mind of one rational being. But the grace of God in Jesus Christ performs it. And the mind to which it comes, is made itself to wonder, at the change which it undergoes,—it wonders now, at the ignorance and darkness in which it formerly lived and moved,—at the indifference which it formerly experienced towards every thing of a spiritual nature and character; and though it may not be conscious at the time, of this being in itself divine, or saving, or effectual grace, yet the grace itself will give proof of it, the mind will continue to own its sway, and dominion, and efficacy. It cannot now turn away in

its habits from the objects which have been thus brought before it, by the effectual working of the Spirit of God. It is wonderful,—we mean the effect of grace in the soul, in showing to the mind its misery while alienated from God; and the vanity and emptiness of all the objects which the mind and affections formerly prized; and in making the individual who formerly sought happiness on earth, now to seek it only in heaven, and in the favour of God,—in the inheritance of His glorious kingdom. The effect of this grace is, moreover, wonderful,—in its bringing before the mind in such visible demonstration, spiritual and eternal objects, making them clearly manifest to the mind which did not formerly know them, or believe in them, or actively seek to know them. All created power could never effect such a change; but divine grace implants in the soul a spiritual principle,—spiritual power, by which the soul now has intercourse with things and objects above. The effect is wonderful and surpassing, in the subduing of evil affections, in destroying their influence and ascendancy in the mind, in the character, and in the conduct. It is wonderful, in the effect it produces over the views, the wishes, the motives, and affections of the mind of man, renewing *all* these, and making them obedient to God and zealous for His glory—altering the whole character of the inward, and of the outward man also, and enabling the sinner, who

before was disobedient to God, and utterly estranged from Him, to live in communion and fellowship with the Lord, and with heavenly, spiritual, and eternal objects; and giving it strength from day to day, from time to time, under the soul's apprehension and feeling of its own inability, and insufficiency and weakness, still to overcome, and to give glory to God, in adhering closely unto Him. Now, all this proceeds from Christ, this is the fruit to the converted soul of His character, and of His works, whose name is called "Wonderful."

The effect of this grace is farther wonderful, in the ways, modes, and times, of its laying hold of the soul. It is wonderful in its progress onward from strength to strength; and wonderful, in the glorious consummation to which it leads, in redeeming the soul from all suffering and sorrow at last, and in bringing it unto Zion with songs and everlasting joy; and wonderful in the glory and happiness which are to be there enjoyed throughout eternity.

Well then may we address the convinced and trembling sinner, in His own words, whose name is called Wonderful. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." But remember, that in you, this wonderful work must be accomplished. Let the believer rejoice in this glorious name; and while it is proclaimed to all, may all of us seek His grace and power, while yet it is called to-day.

SERMON XVIII.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

His Name shall be called Wonderful.

WE have been already endeavouring to direct your attention to the important and vital subject of our present text. And while we must not occupy your time in returning to what was then advanced, we would just briefly remind you of one thing connected with the subject, and submitted formerly to your solemn consideration; that we do by no means attempt, in dwelling upon it, to explain the wonders which it embraces, but to direct your mind to the contemplation of them; but recollecting, at the same time, that while they are wonders they are also matters of *fact*, accomplished and standing forth to full view, in all the force and majesty of clear and authentic statement, in the Gospel record; and God there calling upon us, as reason-

able beings, to consider and to lay them to heart. And we would also here once more remind you of the responsibility which lies upon you, as the subjects of God's moral government in the world, to consider, and most seriously to ponder; what comes to your door as the announcement of His will, and the manifestations of His glorious character and perfections, in the person, and doings, and sufferings of Him who is called "Wonderful." We are not, indeed, to expect, that in proportion as the mind is directed to this subject, its wonders shall then cease to be viewed as such by the understanding and mind. So far otherwise, that these things, the more they are studied, shall appear to our view the more wonderful still. But while they do appear so, what we need is, that they should be impressed upon our mind, in all its faculties and powers, as distinct and important matters of fact, in which we, personally, have ourselves, the deepest and the most solemn concern. We also endeavoured to set formerly before you, how, even in natural things, every object becomes the more wonderful and amazing to the most intelligent mind the more it is scrutinized and examined; and that all human knowledge, and effort, and science, have been able hitherto only to arrive at a bare knowledge of facts. And we would now again remind you, that as we need certain capacities of mind,

certain faculties and powers, for the investigation of facts themselves of a natural and physical kind; so do we need a newness of disposition, for the true; and accurate investigation of facts, which are spiritual in their nature, and beyond the reach of man's natural cognizance to have found out or discovered, but which have been made known, as they were constituted by an immediate and supernatural interference of Deity upon the earth. Such are the facts of that marvellous and great salvation ordained of God in Christ Jesus, and manifested by Christ, whose name is "Wonderful." It will surely be admitted by every rational and intelligent being on earth who acknowledges the existence of God at all, (and we do maintain that nothing by possibility can be so entirely irrational as to deny that fact), that they do little honour to that Eternal Almighty Being in whose existence they cannot but believe, if they would limit His power, or the exercise of His almighty sovereignty, which they feel He must possess, to one course of systematic working and operation, the same as exhibited in the frame-work and constitution of the material world. Is God,—to speak with reverence and solemnity, is God by incapacity, limited to that exercise alone of His power and other attributes? O, surely, my friends, He is not! Has He just the amount of power and no more, which was necessary to frame,

and to organize the works of His hands which we contemplate, and every smallest portion of which, when carefully considered, is sufficient to fill us with astonishment and with awe? Who is it that created our own mind, investing and endowing it with rational faculties and powers? And is He limited to just that amount of power only, and no more, which set up such a marvellous machinery of an intellectual being in each one of us? Has God, indeed, to speak again with solemnity, expended His strength and power upon the setting up of this marvellous work? We are persuaded, that every mind, reflecting upon it at all, will yield at once the position, that such an idea is foolish and vain. And where then have we discovered the obligation which can by possibility lie upon God to execute all His works, and to wield the sovereignty of His own moral government over us His creatures, only in the manner which we would wish, and in which we fancy we would be ourselves capable of understanding thoroughly all the modes of its spiritual operations? Is this, we would ask, an obligation on the part of God, likely to exist? The intelligent and unbiassed mind will surely answer, even that such an obligation cannot exist on the part of God. But may we not advance this one position farther with confidence, in appealing to the rational mind of

every man; namely, Has not God the power and the sovereign right, on the highest principles of eternal justice, to interfere in the moral government of His rational creatures, in a manner and by works and deeds apart from the ordinary rules and laws of the natural universe, and in a manner altogether above and beyond those laws? We think we demand not too much when we ask this to be conceded. And, once more, we would put it to every rational and intelligent mind in our hearing, whether from all that we see of the stamp and impress of Deity on the very works and operations of nature around us, if we consider it not just and legitimate, that God should call upon us, in observing His works, and in our being placed under His government, to believe, that He can give to us power of mind to contemplate the facts of His sovereign interference in the moral and spiritual government of His rational creatures, in the same manner as we do the facts of His creative power and wisdom and goodness in the natural works of His hands, in the midst of which we are placed? Now, we maintain, that in all the revelation which God has given us in His word, this is the very call which He makes upon us. There is true and deep knowledge of the human heart, in that passage of Scripture, which avers, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto

him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But is it irrational or illegitimate that a human being, feeling that he is so much, in practice, a stranger to spiritual things, should seek from God Himself, the understanding wherewith to contemplate them, the mind wherewith to feel and to appreciate their paramount, and their eternal importance to himself individually? This is what God commands us to do, in all the revelation which He has made to us. And this spiritual power He promises freely to bestow. That person, who in the passage now cited is called " the natural man," would measure every thing by the laws and operations of nature, because its objects and operations are, to say the least, the most familiar to himself. But the power which we need is, that God would enable our mind to contemplate *Him, more* than the operations of nature, in His spiritual character and perfections ;—that such a desire and such an ability should be implanted within us. This is what God offers and promises to do to us, beseeching us to come to Him, as needy suppliants, seeking from Him this gracious interference and working in our behalf. It is surely neither unreasonable nor irrational to maintain, that God is able, thus to bestow upon the mind, new and spiritual strength, in the exercise of which we might contemplate Himself, in

His spiritual perfections and character, and in such measure, that we might seek to serve and to glorify Him, with our spirits and our bodies which are His. We do maintain, and with fearless assurance, knowing it by experience to be the truth, that the mind of man, naturally, is averse to the considering at all of spiritual objects with assiduity, or with labour, or care; we do maintain, that every rational being may well be sensible of this in their own experience. We would desire to *fix* your solemn and serious attention upon this fact and feature of your mental constitution and character. Now, is this good? Is it wise? Is it, or can it be salutary? You will tell us that you are not *assured* of such things, that you feel not their existence, or presence, as you do of the things which concern you in your temporal and worldly relations. That assertion of yours, we most fully believe. But we would have *you* to believe, that this is the very disease of your nature, of your inward man; and that it is for the very purpose of subduing and overcoming it in your soul, that a new and spiritual bias of the mind is necessary for you. We would seek, my friends, to fasten your mind's observation on this fact, which we now advance. Is it not somewhat suspicious to you, in its very appearance, even allowing that spiritual objects have never yet appeared before you, in their solemn and true relation to yourselves,—that

you should be repelled and driven back from the very considering of them, by some innate power which works mightily in you? Even granting they did not exist, it surely could do you no *harm*, to bestow upon them somewhat of your thoughts at one season or other. Is it not true, that very repeatedly, in the currency of your lives, you have devoted much of your mind's working, strength, and time, to the contemplation of objects altogether ideal and vain,—and which you well knew had no existence whatever. Did it not require rather an effort, to withdraw your mind from those mountains of vanity, and to bring it down to the sober and humble paths of passing realities? But when called to the contemplation of things divine and eternal, have you not felt a principle of repugnance operating within you, and drawing you backwards? And is there not here manifest evidence, that it is not in the spiritual matters themselves, it is not in the uncertainty regarding them which you profess to feel, that the cause of your antipathy or repugnance lies; but it lies in your own constitution of mind. We cannot perceive how any rational being can deny this fact. Now, the account of this fact which the revelation of God affords, is, that it is a spiritual disease introduced into your mental constitution, and which has need to be remedied. And the remedy for it proposed and offered in the glorious Gospel of

Christ, is a spiritual endowment of the mind with principles to overcome and subdue it.

Now, we would put it to you personally, Do you seek to receive this from God? Would you wish to receive it? If you tell us you would; then your course is plain;—*ask* it. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." But if it be the witness of your conscience and heart at this moment, I seek not this, I desire it not:—then we have the strongest evidence possible, that the principle we speak of, aversion, dislike to things spiritual, divine, and eternal, rules in your mind; and that it is not want of evidence concerning them, which hinders you from seeking after them, but this very principle of spiritual evil operating within you,—this spiritual disease of the soul. We leave therefore this matter to your serious and sober reflection; and may God grant, if you be in our hearing, to whom these observations apply, that you may seek wisdom from God, and the guidance which He offers; and that you may yet and soon, learn by a blessed and happy experience, the comfort and joy, of truly believing in God, and in Him whom God hath sent, following on to know Him, and experiencing the cheering, the elevating, the purifying hope, of a blessed and glorious immortality with God in the heavens. Is it not a wonderful thing, that the

power and wisdom of God, should devise an order of things in our visible world, in which, from the bleakness, and bareness, and chill of the winter season on earth—the freshness, and bloom, and beauty of spring-time, should arise and present to your eye and your mind all its pleasing and cheering smiles of life on every side in your path, —that the whole face of creation should again live, and present to your view a scene of new, and fresh, and renovated charms? What power could effect this, but the Almighty power of God? And are not your minds just as much His creatures, as the grass you tread upon,—the flowers you look upon,—the scenes of wonder in all their details and aspects, which you love to contemplate? Could not God have arranged and appointed a constitution of nature, in which no winter existed, and in which spring, and summer, and harvest would be continually and successively new? Surely He could. Can you scan the reasons why it has pleased Him to order it otherwise? You cannot. And the physical reasons,—the advantages of a winter to the vegetable kingdom around us, which some will tell us of, are but mere futility in our present line of argument; for the very power which constituted all the varied tribes of creation, could have framed another constitution of things, in which such an advantage would not be needed at all. And in like manner, God, for reasons that

we, in our present state can never scan, has permitted a desolating winter to fall upon the souls of men, in which their spiritual beauty and comeliness,—their union to God, and their conformity to His likeness are destroyed. But He has ordained in Christ a method of renovation and of spiritual spring-time to the soul. It is wonderful in its constitution, and in the character of its working, in the hearts and souls of His people; but though wonderful, it is true; and its effects are blessed and glorious.

But we must here once more advert to the state and character of those who make profession of willingness to be thus renewed and restored to spiritual life, who confess in themselves, the evil principle of which we have spoken, and their desire to be delivered from its power, but who yet in reality are not engaged in seeking it. You profess to desire the spiritual renovation of mind of which we have spoken; but where is your evidence that you do truly desire it? On this the only rational evidence *can* be, that you give yourselves *to* the *seeking of* it, as a matter of actual business. Do you make it such business? Permit your own conscience to make reply to our question. How much does it occupy your time, your attention, your care, your thoughts, your habitual meditations; and what life, and energy, and earnestness does it give to your prayers and your supplications with God? Deceive

not yourselves, for this is matter of eternal moment to your spiritual prospects. If it have not assumed with you yet a mastery over the principle —the evil principle we have spoken of—then, assuredly that evil principle still governs you, be your outward profession what it may. Consider your danger in being satisfied with such a profession. The matter lies in actual work, that work being effected within you, this wonderful change being *actually* produced. And if it be not, even so far as to keep you earnestly and habitually engaged with God, looking to God, and waiting upon Him, then surely you are still in your sins, and you are trusting in vanity :—what a man soweth, that he shall also reap.

And in the next place, we would seriously and solemnly caution those to whom indeed the matter *has* assumed a shape and view of importance, and with whom it has actually engaged their efforts, and desires, and prayers,—to see, that to such efforts they trust not, as if the work were already performed, and they already placed in a state of security. All your diligence and spiritual industry are but means to an end; they are means indeed which God has commanded, and which He has promised to bless; but means are one thing, and the end is another. Look inwardly upon yourselves, and behold still how separate from God, and from spiritual, eternal objects are all your affections; and how little love to God

rules, as the vital, predominant principle in your heart and your life. And while you feel, that in this you come short, press forward to that mark for the prize,—the end of your calling in Christ, to be conformed to the will and to the image of God, and thus prepared for His glorious kingdom. Rest not in the works you perform, but in the gracious God who invites and commands them. Believe that it is He, who worketh in you, and that His working is wonderful: and let this form to the anxious mind its highest encouragement, to work out its salvation with fear and with trembling,—for the dangers surrounding you, and impending over you, are great, numerous, and alarming, and only to be overcome by *His* divine strength and protection who worketh mightily in His people, and who is wonderful in His spiritual dealings with the sinful children of men. Be you assured, that every view and impression your mind receives of its need to be changed and sanctified, and made truly obedient to the Lord, is given from Himself, and given for the purpose, not of disheartening you, in your view of your past character and state, but to stimulate you onwards, to seek and receive from *Him* abounding grace, which will secure you the victory finally; but not in slothfulness on your part, or in any habitual carelessness of the end of your calling.

We formerly stopped with considering Christ

and His salvation wonderful, in the effects produced by His grace, in the souls, in the character of His people. He finds them sinners, alienated from God, and living in forgetfulness of Him, in disobedience against Him, and averse in their minds from being made obedient. It is a wonderful thing assuredly, that the mind and constitution of man, should be so changed, as to love what he hated, and to hate what he loved. This does happen, in the effectual working of that grace which is in Christ Jesus. But it is not in this wholly, that the wonder of such a change consists. The like change may be said, in some degree, to pass upon the mental constitution of every one in their different stages of life, and in their connexion with temporal pursuits and enjoyments. But the change effected by the grace of God, in converting and sanctifying the soul, consists still more, in bringing into view with the mind, objects which it formerly knew not, and against which it had innately a strong prejudice even to know and recognise them at all; and in uniting the mind by the strongest bonds of attachment to those very objects. And among these we must place first of all, God Himself. It may seem hard, and even unwarrantable language, to hold, that the mind by nature knows not God, and entertains innately a strong prejudice even against knowing Him. But the fitness and truth of such an as-

sertion will remain wholly warranted, when we consider that it is God in the moral perfections of His character we here speak of. These moral perfections of God constitute His true and essential character. It is in vain we think or say, that we know God, and still more vain to say that we love Him, when these perfections of his character are not habitually or at all present to our mind, and when there is not present to it also habitually, the relation in which we stand personally to this God as the creatures of His hand, the subjects of His government. It is true, that the existence of God may be admitted by you, and that you may dwell at certain seasons or times upon the fact of His existence; but this surely is altogether different, from your beholding what His perfections of character really are; and what you personally have to do with Him. Now, we do aver, that these latter form objects but foreign to the human mind in its natural state, alienated as it is from God, through sin. And the wonders of this grace, of which we speak, consist very greatly, in working such a change in the heart and mind, as to place these objects habitually and clearly before the mind, until it is brought to love God supremely for what He is in Himself, and to seek to serve Him habitually in spirit and in truth. This is wonderful, but it is accomplished in the

souls of those who are visited and blest with the saving grace of God: and it is the true and practical object of the Christian mind, to see, how this important and essential change is making advancement or progress with itself; for it is the preparation necessary for the kingdom of heaven.

But this grace is in other respects wonderful, in its saving operation and exercise. It is communicated to the mind, not by any natural operation of the mind itself, but by the power of God. It is true, we are invited and commanded to seek it: it is true, that in the exercise of seeking, it is found and received; but it is not the exercise of seeking, or the anxiety of the seeker, that produces it, establishing any new principles in the heart and mind. God by His Spirit brings conviction of sin and guilt to the mind with power. He commands spiritual light and understanding to come to the mind. He by His Holy Spirit implants them there as new, spiritual, living principles, and raises them into active operation and exercise. It is wonderful, that God should so deal with men; not only when we consider His glorious majesty, and our insignificancy in His sight, but when our sins and disobedience had deserved His wrath and severest judgments;—and by the presence and dwelling of His Spirit with us, that He should bestow, so to speak, so much pains, in raising our

character from being the slaves of sin, to be the children of God, and heirs of His kingdom.

This grace is wonderful in its working, and efficacy, when we consider that in course of its progress, its very nature is, to show more and more of the majesty and glory of God to the soul, to make the soul feel more and more of its own unworthiness, and its own unlikeness to the moral perfections of God, and yet to desire the more, conformity to those perfections. The mind of man naturally is much in love with itself. It has complacency and pleasure in contemplating the extent of its own powers, and its own acquirements; and its own excellencies; and the natural desire of the mind, is to concentrate more and more into its own elements and acquirements and habits, what will permit it to have more of this complacency in itself, and to bring to it an increased tribute of reverence and esteem from others. But the grace which is in Christ Jesus, is wonderful, in that it changes this system of moral action, so far, as to make the mind look to the moral perfections of God, as the standard of excellence; and to admit, that there is none good but one, that is God. And this grace obtains a more wonderful victory still, in drawing the mind with desire forth from itself, and to have its delight in God, and in seeking and hoping yet to obtain full conformity to the moral and spiritual beauty of His perfections and image.

If you consider these things seriously and deeply, the nature and working of this grace will appear to you more wonderful than they yet do; and the matter of sorrow will be to the children of God, that they will appear wonderful by contrast with their own actual condition of soul, when they experience within themselves the workings and rule of sin, and of practical disobedience to God. But in this state, you must remember, that He whose name is Wonderful, watches over your spiritual interests, and that His working is, to subdue the mind, bringing it down from all its fond and partial views of its own moral excellencies, and showing it, that these count not with God, but in proportion as they come from above, and attach the soul to Him who is above; until you lean upon Christ for every thing that is truly and spiritually good, knowing that in you there dwelleth not by nature, any one principle, but that which is spiritually wrong and impure in the sight of a perfect and holy God.

But this grace of God, manifested in its effectual operation, is wonderful, in the victories which it obtains in the Christian's daily practice, over the evil elements of a polluted, a spiritually debased constitution of mind, in resisting and overcoming temptations, in the practices of self-denial, in the exercise of confidence and trust in God under the severest trials and the most

afflictive dispensations. The very nature of this grace, is, to produce such effects, its strength is, to be practically superior to the evils of our own nature, and to the evils which are in the world, —to hold the Christian looking above the world to God, and to everlasting happiness with Him; and learning to glorify and serve Him in the life that now is. All this is the effecting of a wonderful change: an individual to be brought from that state, in which he really and practically lived, only for the end of pleasing and satisfying his own mind and its natural desires; into a new state, in which he seeks supremely to please God, to serve Him; and to feel habitually, that such is the true way of real and substantial happiness. And it is wonderful yet more, in that when the believer, in all these spiritual duties and exercises and habits, feels and fears that he is utterly weak, and insufficient for any spiritual duty; then is he strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. The believer realizes an experience of soul which is wonderful in itself; the assurance, that in all these spiritual things there is reality, and such reality as sinks other objects—objects of a temporal kind, whatever their value be, into comparative insignificance. The simple, unlearned, and unlettered believer, when he is one in truth, and by divine grace, has this assurance in a wonderful manner indeed;

not by process of literal reasonings, or of metaphysical inquiries and lessons; but by the innate force and strength of the grace of God itself in the soul, and the teaching of the Spirit of truth savingly applied to the heart, and obtaining a spiritual influence there, which gives to him an actual relation to heaven, an intimate and established converse with things above.

And we speak not here of that assurance regarding his own spiritual well-being and his personal safety *now* in Christ, which some do undoubtedly obtain, and which every true Christian does assuredly seek and strive to obtain; but we speak of the anxious, the weary, and the tried Christian, who can only say that he seeks to wait upon the Lord, and that he is yet but striving to put his trust under the shadow of His wings. This very feeling of assurance regarding the reality of spiritual objects, regarding the eternal truth of all that the Scripture unfolds to him, this is the very embodying of the principles of true Christianity, in the mind and soul of man, and which, when it is thus embodied there, will grow up and increase into fulness of spiritual stature and strength in the Lord. And among the wonders on earth which constantly meet our view, may we not truly rank this as one; the beholding of such a spiritual work begun and carried forward in human minds, however few their number,

which we may personally know of; when the great bulk of mankind around us seem so wholly unconcerned about the interests of their eternal salvation, and refusing to seek to God, who is making Himself known to them in the tidings and invitations of His gracious Gospel.

That the scheme of salvation ordained and accomplished of God should embrace in itself a series of wonders, ought not to surprise us, though it ought to awaken all our gratitude of soul, that to ourselves individually, that salvation is freely, and abundantly, and fully offered. We must remember that God is not such a one as ourselves; that as the heavens are high above the earth, so are His thoughts and His ways above our ways and thoughts. And the greatest wonder of all this manifested work, is, that God in very deed should dwell upon the earth in our likeness,—that He should condescend to veil His glory and appear in our world to manifest to us His everlasting love towards us; and in the exercise of that love, to work out eternal redemption for us. And as this is the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, so must it become the source of every comfort, of every consolation, and of every hope, to the believing and converted soul. Not, indeed, merely as it is a wonder, speculatively considered, but as it is a matter of wonderful *fact*, and from it flowing in abundant fulness, all the spiritual provision necessary for our everlasting

good. It is on Christ, personally considered, that the believer's mind must come to be steadily fixed; receiving the blessed assurance in Him, that God is gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and slow to anger, and ever ready to succour and help the poor and perishing sinner who seeks to Him for the purchased blessings of His salvation. It is well, when the mind is turned and constrained, from the feeling of its own guilt and danger, to take up its confidence here. It is well, when the mind is enabled to say, that in this contemplation of Christ it beholds the door of hope opened to itself; and grace vouchsafed, to pardon all its sins, to overcome all its rebelliousness and evils, and to deliver it from every snare and from every temptation. It is well, when the soul closes, in its personal and true experience, with the declaration of our text, that Christ's name is Wonderful, in the amount, in the nature, and in the purchasing, and bestowing of His precious and excellent grace. But it is better still, and equally needful as this admission; to experience, that He by His Spirit, according to His promise, is attracting the soul towards Himself, in love, and rendering it more and more zealous to give obedience to all His commandments, from that principle of love to Him established by His grace in the heart. And while the Christian feels his own sad and continual shortcomings, his backwardness even to believe, and

to have that belief in Christ practical in the soul, and commanding the conduct; let him remember, that his spiritual advancement and strength are committed of God to the hands of Christ as an almighty mediator and friend; and that He now, in all the divine love which He manifested in coming to earth, in living upon the earth, in suffering for sin on the earth,—that He now lives in heaven to bestow His grace, to make it triumphant to the saving of the soul, to the perfecting of it in newness of life, in holiness of character, in fitness for heaven.

Remember then, that the wonderful name of Christ embraces in itself all that you require,—that for this purpose He now liveth and reigneth for ever, that you might know His name, and that you might derive spiritual wisdom, and strength, and power from His wonderful and eternal fulness. He is manifested to you in the Gospel of peace; therein He assures you, that because He lives you shall live also. Bear continually in mind, that in Him the wonder is accomplished of a communication opened between God in heaven and you on earth; that you are invited, in every season of need, to draw near to Him, He never being far from any one of you, but ever ready to help, in your time of need. You are called upon to remember, that from Him you must receive every principle and movement of spiritual life in your soul, every portion of grace

which will enable you to resist the evil workings of sin, and to deny every act and practice of ungodliness,—and that in His wonderful love towards you, and care of you, He is intimately acquainted with your wants, and eternally able to supply them all, and to build you up, to stablish, comfort, and settle you. Let it be *your* care, to make manifest on earth, for His glory's sake, that His grace is wonderful towards you,—that it separates you from the evils and sins which debase and pollute the world, and fill it with moral guilt and with misery as their fruit. Let it be your care and your constant exertion to obtain intimacy of communion with Him, through the testifying power of His Spirit to your soul; of His wonderful goodness and love, and His almighty power to save and deliver to the very uttermost. And whatever may be the difficulties and trials which now surround you, He in His power will manifest Himself to you wonderful in His working, making way for you to overcome or escape them all, and to have spiritual profit by all the counsels and dispensations which He appoints; for He orders them all. Seek you from Himself the wonderful strength which He imparts, of still trusting in Him, committing all your cares unto Him, and truly believing that He will conduct you by His counsel here, and afterwards receive you into His eternal glory.

SERMON XIX.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

Counsellor.

THE title here given to Christ implies much, of a doctrinal and practical nature; more indeed than we can hope, in the compass of this address, to be able to bring before you, were we even furnished with light and knowledge sufficient to enter into a spiritual view of all that it really embraces. The whole tenor of scripture bears testimony to the distinct personality of the Son; that He is a person of the Godhead distinct from the Father as to existence, though united with the Father as one, in the qualities and moral perfections of that existence: and in unity of purpose and counsel, and end of working, and ruling, and governing, one also with the Father. Counsel may be said indeed to exist even with one person or being. A person may be said to take counsel, strictly speaking, when there is not any other but himself party to that

counsel; but it will be acknowledged, that in the current and ordinary use of language, it is more common to speak of counsel as taken between parties, or among some certain number of persons. We do not here mean to enter into any lengthened argument on the subject of the distinct personality of Christ; nor do we hold it necessary, if indeed proper, to make subject *for* argument of that which the word of God renders sufficiently clear, with an authority superseding argument, with all those who receive that word as the inspired word of Jehovah. But when this title is ascribed to Christ, it is manifestly calculated to remind us of the counsel and plan of salvation, originating with the persons of the Godhead from eternity, and in which each person of the Godhead had an equal sharing as to purpose, and end, and consequences. While the part belonging to each person of the Godhead is equally necessary to complete and perfect the whole,—a subject which it were well that the believer more fully and habitually contemplated,—there can be no doubt, that the part of this counsel, of this way of salvation, which Christ the Son took upon Himself, is pre-eminent in its nature, in its revelation, and wonders, to the sinful children of men, who were the objects of that saving mercy and everlasting love, from which all the counsel eman. ated, in the mind and purposes of the Godhead-

The Father decreed and determined to save sinners, because He loved them, from all eternity,—even when He foreknew how unworthy they should become through sin, of His love being perpetuated towards them. The Son determined to save sinners; and when none other way could be found but that of sacrifice for sin, and ransom for the transgressors; and when none other sacrifice and ransom sufficient could be found but Himself, He entered into, and agreed in the counsel and covenant ordered with Him and made sure, to become Himself that ransom and sacrifice: in this there is abundant reason, that He, by pre-eminence, should be called "Counsellor;" because He was, even then, endless ages before the world began, the advocate and friend of mankind,—even then, His delights were with the children of men. He stood then their advocate with the Father, saying, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart,"—when that will and that law were, that *He* should humble Himself into the form and likeness of sinful flesh, to be found in fashion as a man, made under the law, to fulfil all its commandments in the room of sinners, and what was infinitely more to Him, and infinitely more awful and mysterious in itself, to endure the wrath and anger of God which were due to sinners. To

Him was known, and to no created being, the full mystery, and the awful nature of that wrath, and the dismal horrors of being exposed even for one moment, in His human nature, to its fearful visitation: To *Him* was known, and to Him alone, with the other persons of the Godhead, the conflict which He would have to endure with the powers of darkness, in His human nature, and with death itself in its horrid and dreary dominion; to *Him* was known every pain, and suffering, and sorrow, which all these in detail would accumulate upon Himself; and all those numberless sins which would be charged against Him as the sacrifice and ransom of sinners: and it was when He *knew* all this, when in His omniscience they all would be presented before Him, in equal clearness, as if they were present already; it was then, He stood the counsellor in Heaven, on behalf of polluted, rebellious, guilty, and perishing sinners, and undertook the work of their eternal redemption. The name Counsellor well applies to Him, therefore; and well does it become the believer to glorify His wonderful name, in considering this eternal counsel in which He stood as the ransom ordained by the Father in His unspeakable love and wisdom; and to put confidence in Him, who possessed from eternity this grace and faithfulness with respect to sinners, as we are. And were the believer guided more frequently into this

solemn and spiritual considering of Christ, it would give encouragement to his hopes and energy to his soul, in casting himself upon the Lord Jesus, as the counsellor who stood for him, when there was no other eye to pity, and none other arm to bring relief. In regarding this eternal counsel of God, we must see, that we forbear not to give glory to God in three persons; to the Father who determined, to the Son who consented to become the ransom, and to the Holy Spirit who undertook to confirm the covenant, and to make its benefits sure to sinners, by coming unto them, and dwelling with them, and working effectually in their souls to convert and sanctify them to God;—that Spirit, whose love and forbearance, and patience, are wondrously and marvellously displayed on earth, when He dwells in the heart naturally sinful, and undertakes the work of its sanctification. To that special branch of this doctrine, to which the text would lead us, we cannot now devote the space which we acknowledge rightly belongs to it. But to all those who have felt their need of Christ, and of the sanctifying grace which He procured, and which now He offers, we would appeal, as feeling within themselves their own need, that the Spirit of truth should be equal with God and with Christ, in patience and love, to dwell with sinful beings as they are, and to bear with them

who are so rebellious against His counsels, and so wearying to His marvellous kindness. And we would call upon *you*, to feel more and more, that the sin of not honouring the Spirit of truth is grievous in the sight of God, and the most injurious in practice to your own spiritual interests. It stands intimately connected with the sin of unbelief in the soul, and ignorance of Christ in His mediatorial character. It is subdued by the mind being so enlightened by the Spirit Himself, as to have continually before it, the counsels of salvation on the part of the Godhead in three persons, wherein all the provisions of your redemption were made, and from which those provisions emanate, toward the soul being established in spiritual comfort, and growth in grace. There is much of unworthy littleness and narrowness of mind, in our thoughts of God and His saving counsels. Our minds cleave to the dust; they reach not forward and upward to the things of God, with alacrity or freedom; and we ought continually, nay, if we wish for heavenly wisdom, and for progress in spiritual life and strength, we must continually wait upon God for a more full, a more clear, and enlarged and spiritual view of His eternal counsels of mercy and love. It is not by looking alone to our own personal insufficiency; and moaning and mourning over it, though we confess that to be

unavoidable discipline to the soul; it is not by that alone, that we can advance in the renewing of the mind, and in the power of giving glory to God in His spiritual service. It is by being made light in the Lord, that we can become strong in the Lord, and be enabled to enjoy the glorious liberty of His children.

But to return to the more immediate consideration of our text, we have to remark, that Christ, with respect to us, is especially the Counsellor, in that He it is, through whom all this counsel of God, and His saving grace are made known to us clearly. The inspired records of truth inform us of God at different periods appearing to His sinful people on earth: yea, as soon as sin was committed, and man had become a degraded and fallen outcast from his Maker, even then did God appear to him; and though to rebuke and to chastise him, yet with this counsel of mercy and love revealed in His divine accents of peace; and in this, and in all the various manifestations of mercy made to His people in every age, we are taught to believe, according to the Scriptures, that it was Christ who appeared, and who thus counselled His people. A revelation of the way of redemption He continued to make by His Spirit, and by His own personal acts, more and more clearly to men; not forsaking them in their lost and pershing state—not casting them utterly

off, notwithstanding their innumerable sins, and aggravated provocations; till the decreed fulness of times arrived; and He came and tabernacled with men on the earth, to make known by full, and living, and personal demonstration, the abundance and eternal duration of that love and grace which are in God, and which He exercises towards the sinful children of men. Christ is, in this sense, especially the Counsellor of His people, in that he sets, in His own person and character, in His doings and sufferings, before them, the revelation of the grace of God—in that He bestows upon us the evidence of all this, not by hear-say and declaration alone, but by positive, and personal, and actual deeds, brought within the sphere of the observation of men, that they might believe in God as a God in Christ made manifest, and that they might have strong consolation, encouragement, and comfort, and hope, in turning from sin to Him, in seeking unto Him, and in striving to lay hold of His gracious offers thus wondrously revealed. Christ is set before us in the Gospel, as continually holding counsel with His Father in heaven. Consider, in the Gospel record, how frequently He separates Himself from the converse of men, to hold communion and counsel with God: how He holds converse with *Him*, at every time, as we might term them humanly speaking, when deeds of wonder

were to be performed for the benefit of sinners, and for the purpose of calling upon men to believe. We cannot peruse the Gospel without being struck with this as a particular feature of its history; and in all this we see, how Christ continued, even in His life upon earth, to be carrying forward the counsels of salvation, in union and oneness with the Father, they both acting as one, and the Holy Spirit abiding upon Christ personally, and dwelling with Him, without measure, as the anointed one,—to preach glad tidings, to those who had no help of man. Now, in all this, there is visible demonstration, there is an embodying into action and deeds, of what the counsel of God is, together with the character of Christ the Counsellor: and herein are we invited to behold Christ, as the well beloved of the Father, "full of grace and truth."

But we are presented with the fullest view of Christ as the Counsellor, in His enduring and suffering what He had undertaken in the everlasting covenant, as the penalty of sin and transgression; in His standing in room of sinners, having all *their* guilt imputed to *Him* as their ransom and sacrifice. It would be, indeed, not honouring Christ as God, even to insinuate that He did not foreknow, to the full extent, what was awaiting Him in His human nature, when He should stand before the justice of

God, to be made the victim for sin—enduring its penalty. But the reality here was so awful, that the human nature of our Lord almost shrunk from the conflict. He took upon Him our infirmities; but His Godhead power and love, these did sustain Him in the dismal and dreary hour. It was then that His counsels of mercy were put to the *test*, *His* personal part of that counsel which must now be fulfilled. It was then, He who longed to be baptized with that awful baptism, was constrained to cry, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I to this hour." It was then that heaven itself frowned in the majesty of strict and eternal, undeviating justice, upon Christ as the surety of sinners. It was then, too, that the powers of darkness were let loose against Him, but found "nothing" in *Him*. And then, too, were the powers of this world, as in league with hell, also let loose against Him, to persecute, to revile, to scourge, and to crucify the Lord of glory. But He was the Counsellor still, the eternal and unchangeable Counsellor, and His counsel stood firm and sure to the end, till He could say, "It is finished." And though the last enemy death, had yet to be overcome, and though he entered into its dark dominion, it was only to conquer it, to deprive it for ever of its sting and its victory, in behalf of

His beloved and ransomed people. He entered the grave, to be the forerunner to His people, of a glorious resurrection; and to secure to them, in that dreary abode of corruption, a union with Him, even in their perishing bodies, and to assure them of the like victory with Himself. And His counsel standeth sure, as entered into from eternity in heaven, so now perfected on the earth; and the earth itself was made to confess the agony of its Creator and Lord on the cross. The visible heavens witnessing His agony there, manifested the appearance of desolation and mourning; and all insensate nature, insensate though it be, was in agony with its Lord. Yet these very heavens and earth, were soon destined to rejoice in His glorious resurrection. And after the accomplishment of all His sufferings, how do we behold Him again? It is as the *Counsellor*, of His mourning, bereaved, and bewildered disciples, comforting their souls by the assurance that He was risen—instructing and counselling their minds in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God—manifesting to them still, by sensible and personal demonstration, that He was still the same, and unchangeably their protector and friend; and that while He was ascending into heaven, He was still to be their Counsellor and advocate there; and as He had now finished His work *for* them, He did but ascend into glory that He might further and prose-

cute as their Counsellor also there, the work needful to be performed *in* their souls, that they might be His people indeed, and the heirs of the same glory for ever; and to manifest unto *them*, and to all His people in every age, that His counsel and purpose would stand, and would be proven in the happy experience of their souls, by His Spirit, sent down from heaven to dwell with them, and to bring them to God.

But our text reminds us also, that while this title is given to Christ as having been a party in establishing the way of salvation, and especially our counsellor there, as Himself the head of that covenant; as having been peculiarly a Counsellor in fulfilling and accomplishing what He undertook to perform and to suffer: as He established for ever the way of salvation according to His counsel, so that He is also the Counsellor of His people in a practical manner. The word here employed, in the original language, signifies strictly a person who gives counsel to others; an able adviser,—one to whom recourse may be had with safety and success, in times and circumstances of perplexity and of need. This answers to the description of the character of the Lord Jesus given in this same prophecy, in the eleventh chapter at the beginning. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord

shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." Here we have, by the words of unerring inspiration given of Christ, a description, calculated surely to encourage the convinced and humbled sinner to draw near to Christ, the Lord of glory, with confidence and with hope of soul. He is set forth to us here, not judging as a man, according to the outward appearance, but in the exercise of His divine attributes as God, knowing all things; and judging also according to that gracious counsel and purpose of His which He established in heaven and perfected on the earth, for the eternal salvation of sinners. And do we not behold, manifested forth in the character of Christ, during His life upon earth, this sovereign ability and wisdom, signally and gloriously displayed? When men resorted unto Him for counsel, how visibly is

there displayed in the counsels which then He ministered, supreme and perfect wisdom; and this mingled with mercy, with faithfulness, and with loving-kindness, to the best interests of those who resorted unto Him. And it was to the poor, to the afflicted, to those who had no help of man, that our blessed Lord peculiarly shewed forth His eternal wisdom and power in counsel and in working. Where sorrow filled the heart, and despair itself had taken possession of the mind,—when, in the darkness and spiritual ignorance which lie as a sore disease upon the minds of our race, the glory and power of Christ were not recognized by the minds of the needy suppliants who came to Him,—still, coming unto Him, their ills were relieved, their distresses all alleviated. One said unto Him,—"Lord if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean." The suppliant was not rejected,—though he even doubted the will of Christ to do him good. Jesus stretched forth His hand and touched him, saying,—"I will, *be* thou clean." And when the mourning sister of Lazarus was now utterly despairing of His counsel bringing to *her* in her bereaved and desolate state, any relief,—when she could only say,—Lord *if* thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,—as much as to say,—this matter is now beyond even *thy* power to remedy;—we behold how graciously, by His own omnipotence,

He manifested His mercy and faithfulness towards her,—sooner than that *any one* should fail of obtaining relief who came to Christ,—the dead themselves were raised to life. And all this accomplished, that in Christ we should have strong consolation and hope,—that to *Him*, we might resort in all our perils, in all our sorest distresses of soul, and commit into His faithful, His almighty and gracious hands, whatever concerneth us.

Now, it is this view of Christ, as He is now exalted in heaven, the Counsellor and friend of sinners, which we are called upon to entertain and to exercise, in our daily and continual practice. The believer ought to remember and know, that a special part of the counsel of Christ is to order all things aright concerning him; that in the counsel of Christ, there is *committed* to Him all authority in the kingdom of providence, and in the kingdom of grace;—that these Christ took into His own hands for the good of His people, to rule and direct and govern them, it having pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. The events of providence in this life, may frequently perplex and discourage, as indeed they do, the people of God. They occur as if they were ordered on purpose, to be contrary to *them*, and to their temporal, and often to their spiritual interests; they assume to the mind a dark and lowering aspect; until the mind, in despondency and

trembling, is ready to conclude, that God frowns upon it wholly; and the temptations of Satan will then dictate to them, why hold on their course, and thus be found, as if mocked of God, and utterly rejected by Him? And their own feeling of sin, will, in these circumstances, often become a snare to them,—and it would utterly sink them into despair, were Satan permitted to turn that feeling to his own advantage against them. If taught of God, you will have the witness within yourselves, that you have indeed deserved His wrath, and not His favour, and the darkened aspect of providence against you, may bring to your soul a dread of God's anger being now made manifest; your trouble and perplexity of mind will then be apt to conceal from you, both the glory of Christ, even more than before, and also, every witness and evidence in your own soul that He ever wrought any thing there; and that you have not the Lord on your side, or Christ your Counsellor, in heaven, to uphold you now, or to send relief, and that your soul will be utterly lost, and God denied by you. But all of this perplexity and sorrow arises, not from any deficiency in the counsel of Christ for your good, or in His power, to save and deliver you:—at the very seasons when you are lost and bewildered, in amazement, and sorrow, and anguish of mind,—even then, Christ, according to His eter-

nal counsel is but perfecting that which concerns you;—you know nothing as of yourselves; but Christ in His counsel hath known from all eternity all that was good and necessary for you, to perfect in you the work of your salvation,—to bring you step by step to the acknowledgment of Himself as your all and in all,—to turn you away from every other source of confidence and of aid, and to make you know His own blessed fulness, by teaching you from the experienced vanity of the creature, that there are consolation, and happiness, and joy, to be found alone in God the Creator, who is blessed for ever, and who in Christ is your God and your everlasting portion.

And on this part of our subject, we would impress it upon the people of God, that they can never in this life, in its possessions, or circumstances, or creature comforts, have any true satisfaction of soul, or any real enjoyment in connexion with these things at all, until they arrive at that degree of enlightening which shall keep ever before them, in their practical habits, that all these things are ordered according to the counsel of Christ, and that over them He rules and reigns; and that whatever is experienced in them of bitterness and disappointment, of vexation, and anguish, and sorrow, arises from their own sinfulness of mind, the slowness of their hearts to believe, —making it necessary on the part of God in His

faithfulness, for their good,—on the part of Christ as their Counsellor in heaven, to put forth His hand to afflict them—to teach them savingly and to profit. And when you remember and think, how slow you have been to believe—how disobedient you have been to those counsels of Christ in His word, which He graciously sets before you—to those counsels of His Holy Spirit which you cannot deny but He was giving you in the secrecy of your heart and mind—how much you have been devoted to the creature, and how little to God—it will surely furnish matter of astonishment to your mind, that the everlasting hand of the Lord has hitherto dealt with you so lightly as it has, and that you are still addressed in accents of love, and consolation, and encouragement by Him, to turn unto Him, and still to put your trust under the shadow of His wings. You have reason, whatever may have been your trials and sorrows hitherto on earth, to adore in them His divine faithfulness towards you, and to acknowledge in them your own perverseness and sinfulness of mind, which have made the affliction and the chastisements necessary. And the improvement of all such visitations to the people of God should be,—and we speak here of many trials and sorrows of soul, of which the world may not know at all, in their personal condition and lot,—the improvement of them should be, to

stir up and quicken your souls into gratitude to your Counsellor, who hath hitherto ordered all things concerning you well; because He still calls upon you to trust in Himself; and because He still encourages you to wait upon Him. And another most essential improvement should be, that you keep your mind more on its watch-tower than ever, to listen to His counsels. For observe, that in the full, and perfect, and good word of the Lord, there is counsel from Christ, addressed unto you as an individual, and fitted for your circumstances, and state, and condition, whatever these may be. You cannot by possibility be placed in any situation, or trial, or affliction, or in any path of commanded duty, but there is counsel in the word of Christ suited to your state, and if you kept your mind awake, listening to His gracious voice, you would be directed by His counsels:—if you sought His counsel, it would come to you,—His language and directions would speak to your heart with a voice of authority and power: and He promises His Spirit's gracious aid to bring these things to your remembrance according to your need, and to make His counsels effectual to you. Alas, my friends, when you view the matter in the light of faith, and of reason itself, if indeed, spiritually enlightened at all, how little respect, must you confess, you have paid to the counsels of Christ in His word:—how seldom and how

little have you felt, that there, Christ was addressing *you*, just as surely and certainly as if His living and personal voice from heaven were sent forth and communicated. Seek from Him therefore the precious gift of a living and operative faith, thus to recognise Him in His blessed word —to know His voice as that of the good Shepherd, and to follow after His counsels, knowing them to be all in wisdom, and grace, and faithfulness to your soul, and to all your best spiritual and temporal interests. Cultivate increasing acquaintance with His holy word, and bless His name that He hath left you that precious counsel on earth, by which to be regulated and guided in all things.

You must also remember that Christ as the Counsellor of His people alone knows the portion and measure of grace which it is good for you to receive. Beware, then, of measuring His faithfulness, by comparing the amount of received grace, according to your experience, with the amount of your experienced wants. You may experience your wants to be great, and you may feel that you have no supply of grace suited to these, administered to your soul, and thus you are apt to despond, as if the Lord Jesus your Counsellor were neglecting and forgetting your cause, and refusing to bestow of His gracious aid upon you. This is unbelief—it is doing dishonour to

Him. His purpose standeth sure; and He alone knows what is necessary for you to receive, and assuredly *He* will bestow it, according to His own wisdom in counsel, for your good, and not according to what you may now judge to be necessary for your comfort and happiness here. And have you not to acknowledge that, notwithstanding all your unbelief, and all your murmurings against His wise and sovereign dispensations, hitherto that He hath cared for you, and that He hath maintained your cause—that when you were complaining as if He had totally forgotten your state, or was refusing to listen to your prayers, because you had not in return the *experience* you wished for—that even then, His grace was working for you, and His good hand was upon you for good,—that when you were despairing of relief from errors and sorrows, His wisdom and His power were at work for you, and that He was preparing deliverance for you, in a manner which you could never have counselled, had the matter been in your own power; and that, at all events He hath until now carried you onward, sustaining your soul, poor and needy though you be, in your spiritual state,—that He hath not utterly left, neither forsaken you. Surely then you are called upon to place all your cares in the hands of this Counsellor, confessing that you are unable to guide yourselves, giving unto Him the glory of

His own faithfulness, and seeking to cleave closely, more and more, to that counsel of His, which He sets before you for your guidance here, that you might walk in communion with Him, and grow up in conformity to His blessed and perfect will. Trust in Him with renewed confidence of soul—cast yourselves upon Him, whatever your experienced state may be now. He is alone the Counsellor in whom there is safety, and from union with whom you can derive that safety in every state and condition.

Nothing can justify delay on your part,—whether now you be saint or sinner, in coming unto Him. He can deliver you, and uphold you, and minister grace unto you according to your need. He spared not even Himself to fulfil the counsels of His grace for your eternal salvation. He will not now deny you His grace, but will bestow upon you your portion in due season.

SERMON XX.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

Counsellor!

In addressing you, on a former occasion, from this text, we took opportunity of mentioning that the title here ascribed to Christ, implied in the original language, specially, one who gives counsel, advice, and rule to others. The following out of this leading view, legitimately connected with, and implied in the title here given, warns us to speak of the practical duties especially which the believer is called to, from his spiritual relation to Christ. To the sincere and true believer in Christ, it were almost unnecessary to point out the right and title which Christ has, to assume and to exercise this function to His own purchased inheritance, His church in the world, collectively, and as individuals. They who do truly believe have received such a view concerning *Him* as the great, and only, and Sovereign Redeemer, that they feel the witness with-

in themselves testifying concerning Him; that not only has He this right, but that to *Him* it *exclusively* belongs in His person, and character, and offices, both as He is essentially God and their gracious Saviour. Surely He who as God ordained with the Father the scheme of redemption, who took upon Himself the unspeakable burden of all its accomplishment, who came, and in our vile, polluted, and sinful world, bore our infirmities, and endured the chastisement of iniquity,—He who endured the wrath and anger of God for sin, and brought in and perfected for the guilty an everlasting righteousness to be freely imputed to them as their own, as their only, but their sure defence from an everlasting condemnation:—He who has turned away from their souls the condemning sentence of a righteous and Almighty God, and who purchased for them, by the sacrifice of Himself, an everlasting inheritance of glory and immortality,—He, who hath purchased and constituted, and received from the Father, in their behalf, a divine government of grace, and power, and faithfulness, that their souls might be eternally safe; and who executes continually, and in love, the functions of that government for them, ruling in heaven, and on earth, and ordering aright all that concerns them, both here and for ever—He in whom resides the power, and authority, and wisdom, which subdue all their ene-

mies, and which alone can protect them from evil, and who bears their condition and circumstances, in every event, inscribed on His heart, watching continually over them;—He, surely, alone, is entitled to be their Counsellor daily, and Him alone it is their duty, their privilege, and their safety, to consult in every case, and to say to Him, on every occasion, in the spirit of humble and grateful confidence; Guide me by thy counsel. It were well for the people of God, that there were upheld in their souls continually, this believing and spiritual view of the Lord Jesus! In this, alas! you come fearfully short, and just in the proportion you do, your afflictions and miseries multiply, and whatever may be the pressure or the number of these,—did you, my brethren, search and examine yourselves, there is not one of them all, that you might not trace, to a forgetting on your part of the counsel of Christ in your practice: you *looked* not to Him and His counsel, in ordering the steps of your going;—you turned aside from considering them, and made choice of your own imaginations, your own evil and vain affections as your counsellors in your practical goings; and therefore it is, that the Lord hath a controversy with you; and when you are repining, and mourning, and fretting, perhaps under the pressure of your afflictions and woes, all that is bitter in these hath arisen from yourselves; and in your sorrows

and pains, which your ways that have not been good, have accumulated around you,—He is the counsellor still, and while *you* have been bringing evil upon yourselves, and rendering chastisement necessary, He is still seeking to do good to your soul, and fulfilling His faithful purposes—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep *not* my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take *from* Him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." *You* have need therefore to learn more and more, continually, that the counsel of Christ alone is your sufficient and your only safe guide; and you have need to know more intimately and clearly in the experience of your soul; that a believing view of the Lord Jesus, in His person and character, and in the offices of His mediatorship alone can dispose you faithfully and sincerely to receive and obey the counsel of Christ in your practice: and that such a believing view of Him can be only sustained in your soul by the ministration of His own gracious Spirit unto you, which is faithfully promised to be given, and to abide with you even for ever, leading your mind into the knowledge of all truth necessary for your salvation, and your practical guidance here. And the power of that

Spirit abiding upon you, is provided, and promised, to subdue in your heart and affections whatever would seek to exalt itself against the knowledge and against the obedience of Christ in His word.

As Christ is the counsellor ordained in the eternal covenant for His people's guidance and good, and all heavenly wisdom dwelling in Him personally, and as the Saviour, so hath He revealed unto us, what His counsel is. He has not left us in doubt or in darkness with respect to His will. It is clearly revealed in the word of inspiration, which is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works;" and while the belief of that truth, as it is in Jesus, is essential to the soul, for salvation, this does not do away with the equal necessity there is, for the truths which are believed being also reduced to practice. And what we would seek earnestly to impress upon you, is, that any belief, or any faith, whatever be its semblance or appearance or name, which does not influence the mind to a cordial and unreserved determination and effort to practice the truths received, is a belief or a faith which is of no avail, and can only add to the condemnation of the soul. And it is with an eye to the universal application of this to every individual of His people, that Christ, the Counsellor of His

church, Himself says it, and says it expressly, with regard to all the precepts as well as the doctrines of His word, "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them *not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and *great* was the fall of it." The counsel of Christ, then, is clearly revealed, and delivered unto us in His word of truth, as embraced in the whole of the Scriptures. There is none of that word which we must view separately from Christ, and *His will.* He, being anointed the Counsellor of His people, from eternal ages, as we formerly endeavoured to show from our context, and the government being on His shoulder from eternal ages, dictated to His servants, and gave to the church, this revelation of His counsel and will, which we have now in our hands. And it is with reverence and godly fear that the believer ought habitually to receive this word of the Lord—not in form, and not in the letter merely, but with the feeling predominant and ruling in the mind,—This is the counsel of Christ! And, my brethren, may I not appeal to *your* experience, who desire to maintain this feeling and view alive in your soul, and say, that nothing less than the work and power of the Spirit of God in your heart, can give you this constant and living impression. Your own mere

understanding and knowledge, and the fullest convictions of reason, that it *is* the word of the Lord which you handle, will *not* be sufficient;—every natural power of mind will be but deadness and death, towards your exercising that communion of heart with Christ, to be maintained through His word, of which you feel you have need: and how good and precious, therefore, is it, that Christ has promised the Comforter, to abide with His people, to supply the absence of His own person on earth, and to you; and that you have the assurance given you, of the willingness of God to impart that teaching unto you, which is enlightening, powerful, efficacious, and vital, and lively: and if you honoured more the Spirit of truth, and were found waiting upon God, more earnestly and habitually for His guidance,—the consolations of the Gospel of Christ would abound more to your soul; and you would be the more enabled to walk in that light of God, coming home to your conscience and heart, which would enable and incline you to follow the counsels of Christ more habitually in your practice. We would seek to bring before you that these counsels refer continually to your habits and conversation—to every step and going, of those relations respectively in which the providence of God hath placed you. We formerly endeavoured to bring before you, how the government and arrangements of Providence, are in the hands of

the all-wise and faithful Redeemer. He marks out for you, individually, the bounds of your habitation, and wherever He hath placed you, He offers you His counsel to guide you. It is not from any deficiency in that counsel of His, that you need walk in doubt or in darkness, with respect to the path of duty. That path, His word sets before you; and the principles which Christ inculcates, are such, that they are applicable to every possible situation, and to every possible emergency that may happen you. One matter of duty, then, to every Christian, is, to have the mind stored with the divine counsels of the Lord; and in every duty, and in every action called to, to see that the first look of the mind be, to what Christ gives as the rule. Were this observed, what safety would there be to the individual, and what peace and comfort of mind:—were this observed, what peace would there be, also, sustained and upheld, in all the associations, and in all the intercourse of man with man, in the world at large. It must be obvious to every one who considers the matter at all, that the difficulty and hardship lie, in the mental constitution having in itself evil principles and powers, which war against the counsel of Christ; —powers and affections of mind, which are adverse and opposed to the spirit and commandments of the law and government of Christ. Take, for instance, what Christ the Counsellor of His people and Church says, respecting the forgive-

ness of injuries, and the spirit of mind which He commands us to bear towards those who injure us. This is the counsel of Christ, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you." Now, if this were looked to;—if you would individually *strive* to obey it, in the exercise of a believing spirit, and in an enlightened view of the glorious perfections of God manifested in the character of Christ,—what peace, and quietness, and blessedness would it not produce on the earth;—what a disarming would it be of those unruly, and turbulent, and malignant passions, which are the moral blight, the spiritual canker which falls upon the face of society—and the cup of bitterness which its constituent members are cursed and tormented with drinking: that cup you mix for yourselves, just in proportion as you harbour in mind the evils which the counsels of Christ condemn; and you also put it to the lips of your neighbour, condemning him also to drink of it;—while a following of Christ as your counsellor, in your habits, would give peace to yourselves; and whatever malignant feelings and passions were excited against you in others, you would, in point of fact, deprive them most effectually of their sting, and their venom, and power, and of the blighting influence they possess over

the minds of those who cherish them, by *your* still manifesting, that you exercise a forbearing, forgiving, and charitable disposition. And never will this spirit be exercised by *you*, till you behold in spiritual enlightening of mind the glory of the Lord, and the nature of your relation to *Him*, as a God in Christ;—the privileges which are offered you in Him, and the comparative nothingness of those trifles in themselves, which now have the mastery over you, and any interference with which, awakens the worst passions of the human breast. If the soul were exercised in looking upwards to heaven, and to the glorious realities *there*, it would feel, that its true and best interests could be but little disturbed or encroached on by all the malignity of the wicked: and looking to yourselves, as sinners indeed, in the sight of that God who offers graciously and freely to forgive *you* all your *own* sins; how could you cherish with freedom, evil wishes, or how could you willingly embody them into action against your fellow-men, when you hear Christ who is the Counsellor declaring unto you. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive *not* men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive *your* trespasses." We cite this, merely as one instance, of following the counsel of Christ in your practice. It will be objected by some of you, How

can we ;—our natural dispositions are opposed to this ? Well do we know that they are ;—but that very fact constitutes the necessity of their being overcome and subdued. The whole object of the counsel of Christ is to restore your mind into conformity with the will and image of God. And when you feel your natural dispositions rising into disobedience against the counsels which Christ has given you for your guidance ;—then is the time of your need to seek for counsel and aid ; and what abundant encouragement have you to seek and wait upon God *for* that aid, seeing it is abundantly provided for you in the eternal counsel of Christ, and by *Him* who purchased it, now freely offered unto you ;—the power of divine grace, in the hand of the Spirit, to subdue the evil workings of sin in the soul. But, to those who complain of those natural evils which are in them finding ascendency in their practice, we would tender the advice, of their striving habitually to keep before them the counsels of Christ in His word,—to have these impressed on the mind, on the understanding, and memory, and conscience. Were those counsels of His present with you, we would almost say, even in the very letter of their import ; would they not restrain the workings of an evil heart ? Would they not form a check, and present a barrier with you to the working of evil, when you looked at them, so to speak, fairly in the face.

When you saw, and could not mistake their meaning, as applicable to your own case, would not this, of itself, help to subdue the unholy risings of passion, and to bridle in those turbulencies of your spirit in *you*, which can only afflict and torment you the more, the more you indulge them. But it is when those counsels are viewed in connection with Christ the Counsellor, seen and received as His, in the use and exercise of faith on His name,—it is *then*, indeed, that they become powerful; and that they will prove a lamp to the feet, and a light to the paths. It was the purpose, and the experience of the godly Psalmist. "I will never forget *thy* precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me. I am *thine*, save me; for I have sought thy precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me; but I will consider *thy testimonies*." Surely there is nothing impossible, there is nothing overwhelmingly hard, that you should always determine, and strive to act upon that determination, that whatever state or circumstance you are placed in, when you are called to act, to consider what is the counsel offered unto you by Christ in His word, suited to your special situation. There is, always, such counsel to be found in His word. Are you not prone habitually to act on the strength of your own affections, your own feelings, and your own passions? You draw upon *them* as your counsel-

lors. There you err; when you have not first looked and considered whether those affections, and feelings, and passions of yours, be in accordance or not with the counsels of Christ in His word. There, my friends, *you*, in practice, deny Christ as your Counsellor;—*there*, you turn away from *Him*, and you follow your own guidance; and just as certainly as you do so, your sins will find you out, and the discovery sooner or later will come to you,—that you have been, in every act of that kind, (if you be indeed of the true people of God,) but bringing upon yourselves miseries and distresses of mind, and perhaps of outward circumstances which will pierce you through with sorrow and pain.

But we would remark, in the next place, that the counsels of Christ, while they are plain and intelligible, are also comprehensive in their nature, and of easy application to circumstances. If your conduct, for instance, refer to the interests of your neighbour, what counsel more plain, or what of more extensive application, than that royal maxim of His, which has in it equal beauty, and justice, and mercy, and wisdom: "All things whatsoever *ye would* that men should do to you, do ye even so to *them*: for this is the law and the prophets." Is there one intelligent mind to which this counsel may not come home with all force, and with all plainness, *whatever* be the emergency or

the circumstances in which you are placed? And is there one human being possessing a moral faculty at all, who must not approve this in sober reason, indeed as a golden rule? Yet, alas! simple, and easy, and forcible as it is, is there any one counsel more than this, despised and neglected in practice, by the great bulk of mankind? But we speak to *you*, who profess yourselves to be Christians, and followers, therefore, of Christ as your counsellor; and how mournful it is, that when He thus does counsel you, in His maxim of meekness, and justice, and heavenly wisdom, that you follow not *Him* in your practice! What excuse can you make, what apology can you offer at the bar of the justice of God, whose counsel it is,—if you be found rejecting in practice, what in theory you cannot deny to be right, and altogether salutary and good? Well may Christ say of you as He said to the people before, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin;"—when we see this very maxim itself so largely and widely departed from in the practical character of men, and, alas, of professing *Christians* in the world. When we see the counsel of Christ so plain, and the conduct of man so perverse; when we see that man cannot but even admit in his reason, the beauty, and fitness, and the unspeakable benefit of this very counsel of

Christ, and yet denying it so much in their practice,—how can we think of denying that there is a fatal disorder in the mental constitution of men; —and that however human nature may be praised and applauded in its present state—how can we deny that it is after all, in a moral aspect itself, but a poor and a wretched thing to boast of,—or that it requires a change,—a deep and a thorough change to pass upon its very inmost constitution and character, which may restore it into moral order, and raise it to moral beauty and comeliness? This itself, which we have now mentioned, as the rule and the counsel of Christ, is applicable alike, to the highest and lowest among all classes of men; and a maxim of itself, which, if acted upon, would turn the world we live in, as if from iron to gold, and would spread forth into every community, and every association, what is infinitely better than all gold, more precious and noble, —a spirit of mutual love, and of mutual charity, to bind mankind together in bonds of mutual harmony, and friendship, and peace. How can you lay your hand upon one element in the human mind which rejects it, and *not say* that it is a base and a beggarly element? And still the elements which do oppose it in practice, are the predominant ones in the practical character of the world. We have spoken of the duty of bringing each determination, and purpose, and wish, to this standard

and rule of the counsel of Christ. We have spoken of this as a duty which, in itself, cannot be but approved by reason itself. But the truth is, my friends, that for the performance of it, there must be a principle of correspondent nature fixed and established in the mind: obviously it must be one of a more elevated character than any which we by nature possess. For we believe that the individual will be more hardy than candid, who will not confess that in his intercourse and dealings with men, he has frequently transgressed the rule; for remember, that it applies to words, and even to thoughts, as well as it does to actions: and while we are free to admit, that there may be found noble instances of its general observance, in the greater actions of human conduct, with individuals,—if we pursue it, and search for its observance in the habitual conduct, and in the minuter actions of the personal history, there is not one, who with regard to it, must not confess themselves to have been too habitually guilty. We stand therefore in need of some new principle in the heart, to raise the mind to this elevation of character; and where can we find it? We can only find and receive it from Christ the Counsellor. And the principle, upon which truly, such an elevation of character may be produced, is that which unites the soul to *Him*, in a believing and clear view of the glorious perfections of God made

manifest in *His* person, and conversation, and character, in His life, and in His sufferings and death; that reception of Him by the soul, as its Lord and its Saviour, which, when fairly established there, will purify the heart, and work by love, and overcome the world. The fact is, however humbling, and however unpleasing it may be to the minds of many to tell them it is so with *them;* our nature is sordid, and we look alone to earth, and its objects, as if these were our only treasure; and we seek vainly for happiness in these, neglecting the things which are unseen and eternal; and nothing can truly elevate the mind, and dignify its character, but its being taught to look upwards to heaven; and to receive such a clear and commanding view of the glorious realities there, and of our own personal interest in them all, as would sink into comparative insignificancy in our mind's view, all the things which are seen and temporal. All the counsels of Christ are suited to that relation in which we stand as creatures, to God the Creator; and that, as a God in Christ, merciful and gracious, while we are polluted by nature, guilty and disobedient. It is true, the counsels of Christ have due and careful reference to the conduct we ought to pursue, with respect to every thing earthly. This we have already attempted to state; and it is by those alone who feel them to be but subordinate, and altogether secondary,

compared with eternal things, that the counsels of Christ, with respect to things temporal, are heeded or indeed understood. Every one counsel of Christ, proceeds upon the principle, that we are immortal, and also sinful beings. Now, we must consent to Christ's counsels, that they are right and good ;—that they are altogether suited to our state : and how can we do this, without being enlightened, and effectually taught, to view and feel spiritual matters in the light in which His counsels bring them before us. Admissions, and vague assents, by our words, will not suffice ;—these will not carry the individual forward in the path of duty becomingly ; these will not arouse or strengthen him, to any good word or work which the Lord requires, in a spiritual and proper manner. We must have the light of the Lord shining in the heart, spreading its divine illumination over every power and faculty of the mind, and ruling and reigning there, that the soul may be subdued into the obedience of the will and the counsels of Christ ; there must be light in the mind to testify of *Him*, and of God as He is manifested *in* Him ; and of that immortality and life and glory, which Christ hath brought to light in the gospel. How true do we admit the common adage to be, that a man is known by the company which he keeps,—that his mind, and manners, and character are all formed, and established by the

associations in which he is accustomed to walk, to move, to breathe, and to live. And in like manner, those who are taught of God the Spirit effectually in their hearts, and who have had their eyes spiritually opened to perceive their own relation to God, and to Christ as their Saviour, to behold of His divine glory and character, and of the things which belong to their peace, are influenced, and moved, and actuated, by those views which they have received, and which are effectually inscribed on their souls. They seek conformity to the will of Christ, and to His image, as the great end of their being. They look above the world that now is, with all its passing vanities, and its polluting and defiling allurements: they cannot give their souls to the world, knowing that its fashion passeth away; and that all its good and its happiness are but fleeting and transitory: and that the utmost and best it can do, will not reach to the satisfying of one desire of the soul. Following the counsels of Christ, they seek to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, where moth or rust doth not corrupt, and where thieves break not through nor steal. Now, to such a course of conduct and action, let me again impress it upon you,—that the only means, the only way, is an establishment in the soul of divine and spiritual principles. And these are freely offered unto us by the Lord Jesus, the divine Counsellor of His

people. "I counsel thee," Christ says, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed;—and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see." He is exalted in heaven as a Prince and a Saviour to bestow these blessings upon the souls of sinners,—blessings which He has dearly purchased for them. The voice of His invitation is gone forth unto all of us. To you, every one, it is addressed in His word—His counsels of mercy and love invite you to come unto Him; and His faithful promises declare, that He will pour forth His spirit upon you,—that *He* will write the laws and counsel of Christ on your hearts, and give them establishment and exercise in your souls. But there must be exercise of soul in coming unto Him,—there must be heed given to the voice of His gracious invitations. It is necessary to every one ofyou that you shou ld *feel* your own need of divine principles being really established in your hearts—for without this, all will be in vain:—the Gospel to you, without this, can be but a dead letter, and all its testimony but means of your heavier condemnation. Do you believe in the counsels of Christ? Do you *seek* from *Him* those new and heavenly principles of mind, which would unite you to *Him* in love, and obedience, and which would render you habitually able and willing to contemplate His glory,

and the eternal realities of His kingdom, which He has purchased for sinners as you are, by His own humiliation, and sufferings, and death? O, my friends, if you do not, the Gospel has been yet to you, but a dead letter;—to this day, whatever may have been your outward profession, you have been loving darkness rather than light, because your works are evil. O let not this continue,—let not that mind longer continue to prevail against you. Come unto Him, as needy sinners; and He will not deny you His heavenly grace. He will enlighten and quicken your soul, to feel your need of Him as *your* Counsellor; and the more that you seek Him—the more that you lean upon Him for that counsel of His—the more will you know its fitness and its excellency; and the more will you experience of peace, and comfort, and consolation, when you are brought to deny yourselves, and to adhere to the counsel of Christ. He will make manifest to you, in the experience of your souls, that His ways are altogether ways of pleasantness, and that all his His paths are peace; and that even with respect to the life which now is, whatever trials and afflictions may come to you, He will stand by you, and strengthen you in them *all*, and enable you to know, that they are appointed in His wisdom and faithfulness, to teach and instruct your souls, and to prepare you for His heavenly kingdom above.

SERMON XXI.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

The mighty God.

"GREAT is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." It is to this great mystery that the words of our text especially refer. He who is born as a child, and given as a son, is "The mighty God." It would be equally erroneous in you, my friends, to expect, and in me to attempt, a simplifying of this mystery: that I should endeavour by any elucidation or reasoning, or curious disquisitions, to make it cease to appear a mystery in your view. But there are a few observations respecting it, which I would now submit to your serious consideration.

Of all those who profess any species of belief in a Supreme Being, there is scarcely any one who will not readily confess, that the Supreme

Being possesses unlimited, almighty power;—that He can, in the exercise of that power accomplish all things, whatsoever he willeth. Without conceding this, the admission that there is a God, is, in point of fact, a contradiction in terms: it is neither true philosophy nor sound reason. That the Supreme Being should accomplish any thing, however mysterious in itself, and set it up, constituted in His own doings and government, as a matter of fact, which we should behold, implies nothing unreasonable or extravagant in itself: and upon those who admit the mere proposition, that God can do all things, there is unreasonableness most palpably chargeable, and the most violent inconsistency, if they express one demur or doubt, concerning the mysterious matter of the fact, which our text announces, and to which the whole of the Gospel bears a uniform testimony so ample and clear. We apprehend, that the question, *could* God accomplish this? can have no legitimate standing, in any controversy between the infidel and the Christian believer. Is it likely, or reasonable, or probable, that God *should* do it? is a more specious question, which the unbeliever has more frequently urged; but which we apprehend to be in itself equally unsound, in reality, as the former. When we speak of this as a question put, we mean, of course, that it is an objection interposed by the unbeliever, to the receiving, as

true, of the Gospel record concerning Christ. While the unbeliever gives it the modest form, apparently, of a question, or doubt, he acts upon it, as if he had already proved his objection valid. But putting the question, or interposing the doubt at all, is, on the part of the unbeliever, arrogating to himself a province and standing, as the creature of God, which is both unwise and presumptuous. It is saying, practically, that he has taken, himself, the full measure of the Deity's mind, and that he has seen, and scanned, and investigated all the eternal counsels of God,—and that he has seen, from beginning to end, all the plans and objects, and ends of the whole moral government of God; and that he himself is fully competent to the mighty business of sitting in judgment upon them all, and of pronouncing what is just and reasonable, and proper, that God should do;—and that when any thing is announced as the doing of God, which conforms not with the estimate *he* has made of what God ought to do, he will not believe or receive it! We speak of unbelievers who admit speculatively the existence of Deity: we speak *to* them, if they be in our hearing; and we demand from you, as reasonable beings, to say, is this a becoming, or suitable, or wise attitude, in which to place yourselves, with the almighty and eternal God, in whose existence and being you profess to believe? You deny the

validity of *Scripture* testimony. On what, therefore, do you ground your theory? On the strength and extent, and power, of your own capabilities and capacities of mind. You take and assume these, as your guiding and governing light; and with them you sit in judgment on the doings of God, and on the plans of His government. You must surely allow, that with respect to God, modesty at least, with you, is not your peculiar virtue! But what is the practical amount and bearing of such a dealing on your part with God? Is it not just the saying on your part, that you are equally wise, and equally possessed of knowledge as *He* is? On your own principles, we see not what single refuge you have, from admitting this charge to be true. You will say, perhaps, that this is an *invidious* charge, and unnecessarily placing your principles in an odious light. We have no desire to do so: we disclaim such a purpose. We shall therefore place the principles you profess, in another point of view, more favourable; for we can amply afford to do so without prejudice to ou argument with you,—and we shall leave it with *you* to say, what you can gain by it. In pronouncing your judgment, on what, it is reasonable, or likely, or probable, that God should do, in His moral government of the world,—for you will not go the length of denying that government to be justly *His province*,—it is essentially

and practically implied by you, that you have full power of mind, as creatures formed by His wisdom and power, to investigate, without the danger or risk of error, all the ends of His procedure and government;—to say, when, where, and how, ought God, and when, how, and where, ought He not, to interfere in the affairs of His creatures. The very assertion,—the very interposing of the doubt,—whether it be likely, or reasonable, or probable, that God should do any particular thing, does *necessarily* imply, all this reasoning on *your* part. And this just brings us again, to demand from you, whether such a course of acting becomes the creature of God to pursue. You speak of evidence! Where is *your* evidence to support you in thinking, that God has created you, in so high and lofty a sphere of moral or intellectual capacity as to qualify you for scanning His counsels, and pronouncing judgment on the line of action by which He chooses to govern and rule His creatures? *Where*, we repeat it, is your evidence of this? Only in the *confidence* you feel in your own powers of observation, and judgment, and reasoning. Is *this* your evidence? We can see none else that you have. And we put it to yourselves to say, if this be evidence at all. With whom do you find, in the affairs and experience of life, the most confidence and assurance in their own powers of mind, and in their

own capacities of judgment? With respect to the most abstruse and difficult subjects, we appeal to you,—Is it not with the most unlearned, the most ignorant, the most weak in intellect and reasoning powers of the species around you? Whether would you prefer to enter into argument or discussion with the man of practical wisdom and sound intellectual vigour, or with the man who is but one degree removed above the sphere of natural idiocy, when your argument crossed the prejudices or predilections of either? Which of the two would you sooner hope to convince? Which of the two would the more tenaciously cling, or the more pertinaciously adhere, to his own preconceived opinions and judgments? Which of the two would set most value upon his own powers of mind, in practice of argument with you? Your answer we know. It would be the weaker man of the two. Now where is your evidence concerning the justice of your own conclusions, when you sit in judgment on the doings of God, and what they are likely to be, or what it is reasonable or likely they should be? It is just the same as the man of weakest capacity and most infirm intellect would have, namely, that he must be right, because he considers himself to be wise.

We do deem, therefore, that in considering the great facts on which all Christianity is founded, the doubt, or question, or assumption, what is it

reasonable, or likely, or probable, that God should do, is scarcely, if at all becoming, on the part of one human being. When there is even a semblance of revelation from God,—when there is one utterance of a voice even *said to be* from Him, or any thing at all approaching to evidence, that He hath spoken, and that He hath wrought, it is the duty and province of man rather to inquire, with meekness and rational wisdom, into what God reveals and commands. And while every thing which we can contemplate in the doings and works of God which are confessedly His, in the natural creation around us, presents us with inscrutable mysteries, while our own very bodies and minds by which we act and think, are a linking and connecting together of one series of wonders and mysteries to ourselves, and that we are the creation of God, *ought it in reason* to form any objection to the scheme of moral government which the Scriptures unfold being received by us as verily from God, that it sets forth wonders and mysteries, which are unsearchable and stupendous in themselves, and the unravelling of which, in their nature and manner, as distinct and separate objects, must ever in this life defy all the limited exercise of those capacities and powers with which God has been pleased to endow us? We may surely leave this question fearlessly to the decision of every rational being, every unprejudiced, unbiassed mind.

The Christian and the unbeliever occupy truly, as rational beings, positions diametrically opposite with respect to God; by an unbeliever we mean one who rejects the testimony of the Scriptures. The latter person presumes, that he is fully able and competent to say, in the exercise of his own mental powers, what God is likely to do, and even what God ought to do. Of such a position we have endeavoured to show the fallacious and deceitful nature. The Christian, or the believer, professes, in his very belief, and whether he can define this philosophically or not is nothing to the question,—professes that his own natural powers of mind are altogether incompetent to obtain true knowledge of God, or to pass judgment on any one of His doings, what they are, or what they ought to be, without ample evidence from God Himself. This is surely the more rational position to occupy with respect to God on the part of His creatures. He grounds all his belief, and gathers all his principles of acting, not from his own erring and weak mind, but in the declared voice and utterance of the Lord of heaven and of earth, who hath condescended to reveal Himself to His fallen and degenerate creatures, when they had departed from Him, and become practically ignorant of Him. The Christian feels in himself, how true it is,—"The world by wisdom knew not God," and "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." "The Lord knoweth the thoughts

of the wise that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men."

I know that if there be any in my hearing now who must rank themselves among unbelievers, by their rejecting the testimony of Scripture regarding God and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, they will be ready to say that we deal too severely with them, in assigning them the position, in which we maintain that they stand with respect to God. We bring you perhaps to the position of maintaining for yourselves, that it is on the ground of deficiency in the evidence by which Scripture professes to be strengthened and made good, you hesitate to receive it, and do not grant to its dictates or doctrines your mind's acquiescence. Now we would lay aside for the present all that which is commonly called the evidences of Christianity, whether historical, external, or internal. Here is a revelation professing to come from God; that is altogether enough for the position which we would now advance and illustrate. The question to you is, does this professed revelation call you to any particular duty? And if it do, then we do maintain, and we think we do so on every rational principle, that it is your business, even under doubts and misgivings of mind, to betake yourselves to the duties to which it calls you. Do not think, that now we have yielded you all. For we know how you will say, that you approve the morality of the Scriptures,—

that you concur altogether with its precepts, so far, and that you strive to obey them. That is one thing certainly, and a very important matter, but it is not *all* of the duty to which the Scripture calls you. It calls you to seek enlightening of mind from God Himself, and it connects this with the promise that such enlightening shall be assuredly given you. Do you obey this call of duty? We put it to you to say, if you give to this duty of praying to God Himself for guidance, and for instruction, one fractional portion of the time and the energy which you expend upon seeking out, and fortifying your objections to the whole of the Scripture revelation? What is the answer which your own conscience can return to this question? And if it be the answer, that you seek not in truth direction and guidance, and enlightening of mind from God, while you cannot surely think of denying that He is able to give it you, this leads proof against you, that your mind is biassed, whether you are conscious of it or no, against receiving the testimony of God in the Scriptures. The very fact, that you do not bestow effort, and pains, and diligence in coming to God, and in seeking that He should instruct you, speaks volumes of proof that you desire not truly to become believers in what the Scriptures unfold. And did you lay hold of this single fact in your own history of mind, it might lead you fully

to understand the causes which truly operate with you, and which produce this practical opposition to the receiving of the truth, or let us say for the present, what professes itself to be the truth of God. You would find, that these causes lie deep and powerful in the heart,—a dislike and aversion to be made, what the Scriptures would have you to be; in one word, that the cause of all others the most powerful with you, is, a preference of the pursuits, and objects, and things of time and of sense, above those which are spiritual and eternal. Now this is just the spiritual disease which the Scripture represents as having fallen upon man, in his apostacy from his Maker, and from the original state in which his Maker created him. And did you, as rational and intellectual beings, search and try the manner of spirit you are of, on this very point, the evidence of the Scriptures' truth would be carried home, to your conscience at least, with irresistible efficacy; and while the whole Scripture unfolds the majesty and glory of God, in His sovereign right over you, and His eternal propriety in you, you would find it to be the very element and bearing of your mind with respect to God, that you are naturally unwilling, to give to *Him*, the place in your heart, and the practical obedience in your life, which He justly demands from you. This is the spiritual condition of man, revealed in the Scriptures. It was

this which rendered salvation necessary for him; and that, that salvation should embrace as its peculiar and essential property, a change of mind and heart,—a deliverance from such a state of opposition to God: and a turning of the whole man to God, to love and to serve *Him*, with that energy and purpose, and freedom of soul, in which before, the things of time and of sense were exclusively sought and regarded. This finding out of the heart's real state and character by nature, this discovery of its own spiritual disease, is what proves to the unlettered and unlearned individual, the truth of the Scriptures, by a demonstration infinitely more clear, and expressive and forcible, than all reasonings of men could ever produce; and than all studying of written evidences, however clear they may be, can bring to the understanding or conscience. And it is this mental and spiritual process being undergone by the simple-hearted and honest human being, be he ever so ignorant in all other respects, which renders him, an intelligent and rational Christian, in the presence of God and of intelligent men, just as surely and truly as the most deeply learned, or the most highly cultivated Christian philosopher or divine on the earth. Let it not be supposed from all this, that we would undervalue the evidences —the written evidences of Christianity, as they are commonly called. They are highly valuable

and precious in their own place. They have put to silence many cavils and objections, and sneers of infidels, and of presumptuous men. They may, and have frequently been, and will still, we are assured, frequently be, the blessed means of saving many a mind from being ensnared by the partial views, and the gross mis-statements, with which infidel men have sought to cast contumely and reproach on the glorious Gospel of Christ, and on the whole word of God, and the way of salvation which that word reveals. But for feeling and proving in the soul's own experience the truth of the word of God, and the value of all its blessed and holy, and gracious doctrines,—the shortest way and the best, is for the individual to seek, himself, unto God, for instruction and enlightening of mind. And is not this a way which is open to all, and to which the Scripture itself invites all, freely, to come? It is the path of duty to every son and daughter of the human race, to whom God has been pleased in His wisdom and goodness to send the word of His truth. Surely, no word of invitation, or of beseeching intreaty, can be more universal than that which the Scripture addresses to all of us, that we turn from our spiritual indifference, and slothfulness, and death, and seek unto God, that our souls may live. And, we hold that reason, and necessity, and fitness, are all on our side, when we invite the unbelieving mind,

to make serious trial of this way, and to raise its prayer and supplication to Heaven, while it professes belief in the existence of God at all, beseeching of that God to lead it into the truth, and to guide it in the paths of truth and of righteousness: a mind that refuses to adopt this way of seeking to God, actually does consent to remain under the power of some principle in itself, which manifestly places it in opposition to God; and constitutes itself the judge of what God ought to do;—prescribes to God the way of His dealing, instead of seeking to be instructed by Him.

I make no apology to professing Christians in my hearing now, for my dwelling so long on this preliminary but important aspect of the subject to which a consideration of our text is calculated to lead us: and I am persuaded, that the more they reflect upon what we have been endeavouring to advance, the more will they find with themselves the importance of giving heed to it. You, whom I now turn to address, have need continually, more and more, to remember and feel, that you, by your own wisdom and power of mind, cannot attain to clear and impressive, and practical views of the great and essential truth which the words of our text embrace, that the Saviour of your soul is the mighty God,—and that such a Saviour and none other, can be a sufficient Saviour to *you*. It is true, that you are called urgently to the duty of seeking unto God, as persons who are natural-

ly of an unbelieving mind. We hold it to be equally true, that, attention to the Scriptures of truth, with solemnity of mind, with examination of your own heart, and with prayer and supplication to God for His enlightening grace, shall not fail to make out in your experience, full and manifest proof, that what the Scriptures declare concerning you, is really and actually true. But while we would seek to lead to this, as a necessary, and proper, and essential beginning of the matter, those who yet stand aloof, and far astray from God; we would impress upon them and you together, that when this proof of the truth is lodged in your mind, the work of your salvation, instead of being then accomplished, may be yet but scarcely begun. When you have discovered, that there are with you evil elements of mind, which turn you away from God, what will this discovery avail, unless those evil elements be subdued, and eradicated, and driven away from you? *That* is the work of salvation,—the end for which God has graciously provided its means, and for which He freely offers them to you. It is a different thing to have a conviction in the mind, and to be actuated by that conviction. We fear that there are many indeed, who have attained the conviction, and who are still far from salvation, from its blessings and privileges. They forget it; and they turn away from the course of conduct to which it seeks to lead them. They inquire not with that diligence or care which

the matter truly demands, into the consequences which follow from their being, themselves, in a state of hostility and enmity with God; and because they are turned away, unhappily, from following out this solemn inquiry, they permit themselves to live in a state of fear and terror, regarding God and eternity. We do not say that this fear or terror *always* preponderates with them: but when they are turned into the practical considering of the matter at all, or when they are urged to it by some external impulse or means, then, this fear and terror become their predominant feelings. They feel no practical confidence in God, as the God of salvation to them. If their mind behold him at all, or realize any sense of His being and character and government, it is only as an avenger of sin, and a judge set in opposition to their eternal interests that they think of Him: and in such a state, how can they enjoy any liberty, or freedom of access to God? It is impossible. The great and essential truths of the Christian scheme of redemption have not yet fully or manifestly been brought home to your hearts, or implanted there, as objects of your soul's sure recognition and faith. When these truths are presented before you, and however precious you may consider them to be at the time, there is some element of mind prevalent with you, which forbids or prevents you from laying hold of them to

yourselves, or as allotted personally for you. You experience doubts and misgivings upon the subject; and in short, you relapse again into your former state of hesitation and indecision, and your mind is not made up to the recognizing of God, as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the author of your salvation; and concerning Christ, as His Son, and the Saviour of sinners, accomplishing a full and perfect way of salvation for you, and freely offering now to bestow it upon *you* in all its blessings. Concerning Him, you, whom we now address, have not, manifestly, we think, in your own experience, the power, or the extent of spiritual vision, to behold Him, in His glorious person, with mental clearness, or the spiritual strength of mind to receive Him unto you as your Saviour, and your safety, and hope. In such a state of mind you leave yourselves, to be tossed about, if not with every wind of doctrine, at least with every new impulse of fear, and doubt, and darkness, and terror of mind, that may come upon you. You have no fixed hope or assurance concerning the way of your salvation; and you are thus in danger of spending your precious time, and the day and the means of grace, always learning, and yet never arriving at the knowledge of the truth, in any manner that it might build you up, and stablish, strengthen, and settle you in the way of peace and of holiness.

Now, in such a state of mind—and we put it to you personally in our hearing, whether it be not your own—what is the aid which you stand in need of? It is the divine power of God to overcome the doubts and the darkness which now prevail with you, and to deliver your mind from their power. Then, what do the Scriptures reveal to you?—that He on whom has been laid the working out of salvation for you, and who hath accomplished it fully, and who now is exalted in heaven to bestow its blessings upon you, is the Mighty God, whose strength is omnipotent, to subdue the power of your spiritual enemies, and to give you deliverance from them. The testimony of His own word is full and explicit respecting His divinity—His equality in all respects, in all the attributes of His character, with God the Father. The proofs which He gave of this, in His own person, and personal doings on earth, stand before you, explicitly and clearly recorded, in the word of the Gospel. You are called upon to ponder these glorious truths. See you, my friends, if you be found in such exercise of mind. But you need together with the setting forth of these truths before you in the word, whether written or preached to you, the exercise of that power which resides with God, to apply them to your hearts, or rather to subdue those evil elements with you, which prevent your receiving

them. Do you seek this power *from* Him? Do you make this a subject of earnest, and urgent, and habitual supplication unto Him? If you do not, then you are just as much resisting the counsel of the Lord, as those others whom we have been already addressing. *They* stand, as it were, far off from the narrow way that leadeth unto life, and make preference of their own counsels and ways: *you* stand, as it were, on the threshold of the gate, and you hesitate to enter in. You neglect to seek from Him, who is the Saviour offered unto you, and the Mighty God, the exercise of that power of His toward you, which would make you obedient to His counsels of salvation in your practice. The power we speak of, and which is vested in Christ, for the healing of your soul, is the almighty power of God. The Spirit of God, who is one with the Father and the Son, co-operates with them, in bestowing it upon the mind. And it is here that we enter properly and directly upon the practical elucidation of the words of our text, in their application to your personal condition whom we now address. You, as individuals of the human race, have fallen under the destroyer's dominion, by original apostacy from God. The doubts and hesitations of mind we have spoken of, as operating with you—in other words, your unbelief of heart—are the work of the adversary in your soul. That work *he* ac-

complished, in deceiving our original progenitors and causing them to fall. This spiritual disease he did thereby implant in the mind of all Adam's race. No created being was able to deliver the prey from the terrible, or to conquer our great enemy, but the mighty God, He who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. He was born as a child, and given to us as a Son, that in our likeness and frame, He might destroy the works of the devil, by resisting him wholly, by overcoming all his power, and all his temptations; and by being given as the surety of sinners, and by suffering all that was due to their sins, in His own glorious person, that He might have a purchased and stipulated right to exercise toward others, that power in their behalf, which He exercised Himself in His life upon earth, with respect to the great enemy of God and of man. He, having accomplished the task assigned Him in the counsels of Heaven, is now exalted there, to further the gracious work of this redeeming power in the souls of sinners. And while the Holy Spirit of God could not dwell with sinful and polluted souls, without their sins being atoned for, by a sacrifice that was in every way worthy, He is now able and willing, for the sake of all that Christ undertook, and did, and suffered, to come and to dwell with men. It is, then, to this glo-

rious and perfect provision of the everlasting covenant of grace, that you are called to come. Christ, the Mighty God, lives and reigns in the heavens, making intercession for you, presenting there the fulness and perfection of the work which He wrought, the victory which He won, and the atonement He made—and to procure to you, and to bestow upon you, the Spirit's indwelling power in your soul—to subdue the ascendancy of sin there, and to enable you to believe in God, as a God manifested in Christ, abounding in love and in mercy towards you —seeking to blot out for ever, the sentence of your condemnation which sin deserved, and to receive you into His own favour—to bless you with a new heart, and a spiritual mind, and to prepare your souls for dwelling eternally with Himself in His kingdom of glory above. Seek then from God, by the teaching and power of Christ and His Spirit, believing views of Him, as the Mighty God; the ability, and the will, and the disposition to receive His gracious offers, and to walk with Him in newness of life, having your souls attracted toward Him, and united unto Him, in the bonds of filial faith and love. There is no sin in you but His power can subdue, no temptation besetting you, from which Christ, the Mighty God, cannot deliver you—no evil threatening you which He cannot avert—no danger impend-

ing over you which He cannot arrest, and procure your deliverance from it—no enemy assailing you, which the word of His power cannot at once and effectually restrain. This Mighty God will be on your side, and ever standing at your right hand, that you may not be moved. Even death itself He has conquered; and when that last and most fearful of enemies shall arrive, His everlasting arms shall sustain your soul, and bear it safe into His own mansions of glory.

SERMON XXII.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

The Mighty God.

IN last addressing you from these words, we endeavoured, in conclusion, to direct your minds to the importance of your considering Christ as the Mighty God. Without so viewing Him, not in theory, and in speculative belief alone, but in the practical habits of your mind, it is impossible that you can have establishment, or comfort, or peace, in the faith of His people, and in the ways by which He leads them. Without viewing and beholding *Him* as the Mighty God, we cannot indeed be said to possess true faith in His name. The language of our text bears, that this is one peculiar title, by which He is called, in the habits and exercise of His people. The text, observe, does not merely state the fact, that Christ *is* the Mighty God; but it states additionally to that essential and important truth,—that He shall be so called by His people. This is necessarily

implied in the very language of the text; the prophet speaks by inspiration of God, in the name of the church;—"Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us*, a son is given," and then he goes on to inform us, in the remaining part of the verse, what are the appropriate titles by which Christ will be known to His people; and one of these is, "the Mighty God." Any view or consideration of Christ, therefore, which comes short of realizing Him to the mind, as the Mighty God, must be a deficient and a faulty view.

We forbear at present, any lengthened remarks upon the sentiments or opinions of those, who deny to Christ His divinity, and His equality with God the Father. Should there be no scripture but the words of our text to warrant us, we would be safe in denominating as we do, that base and polluted system "damnable heresy;" but the whole scripture is fraught with a sentence of condemnation against it; and those who profess it, under the power of Satan's delusion, make manifest by their doings that their doctrine is of Satan and not of God; for they can only prop it up, and gain converts to it, by joining with it other heresies contrary to the purity, and holiness, and spirituality of the Gospel, but which accord with the corrupt and polluted affections of the natural mind. It is by thus warping, and distorting, and polluting the whole doctrines of God, that they

spread their insidious nets for unwary and ignorant souls. They want not zeal and address in their evil way; and from them we must caution all, and especially the youth of our flocks to flee, as they would for their lives from impending danger and ruin. And it is one of the evil signs of our time, that, in a false and unbelieving liberalism among some who profess themselves to be Christians,—those persons, Socinians, and Unitarians namely, receive the name and the title of brotherhood,—being called Christians,—a name to which they have no more rightful pretence on scripture grounds, than to be called princes and kings of the earth. We can have no hesitation in saying, that these men, for they deserve not even the name of a Christian sect,—wherever they are congregated, form the synagogues of Satan in our land, where miserable souls are bolstered up on pillows of a carnal security, and ungodly principles and views, denying the Lord who bought them, and vilifying His glorious and adorable name. This, may by some, be called illiberality; we can only pity those who think so: for if the true knowledge of Christ and of His glorious person and eternal character and name prevailed in our minds, we should find, that we could not keep terms of any brotherly charity, with the views of those who revile and dishonour Jesus on system; and whose great aim it is to bring down His name to the

level of humanity; and the doctrine of His atonement and intercession into the character of things which have neither importance nor value. Respect is due, to all differences of *Christian* sentiment and opinion on minor and secondary points; but this of all matters of true godliness, is the most *essential* point of *all;* and those who dispute and deny it—even the eternal divinity of the blessed and glorious Jesus, are entitled, in no degree whatever, to have their opinions, and their poisonous sentiments, respected. We would pity and pray for their souls and persons, in Christian love, but we must brand their vile and abominable heresy with our decided and marked abhorrence.

But, my friends, we have, we acknowledge, sufficiency of work nearer home, to attend to. And among those whose speculative creed is sound and unimpeachable in all its articles, and who make open profession of the name of Christ;—it is with you, we have specially to deal; and it is you whom we have to warn,—that profession of His name outwardly, cannot save you; and that there must be true knowledge of His name and character with you in the inner man,—else that you cannot be saved. Your salvation depends, instrumentally on your spiritual knowledge of Christ, and the exercise of that knowledge in your soul's inmost and habitual history. He must

be known of you as the mighty God, in the glory of His person, in the amount and value of His finished work,—in the excellence of His doctrines, and in the extent of His saving power and strength as the Saviour of your souls, redeeming them from death, and restoring them to newness of spiritual life, and strength, and energy: and without this experience of His name, and character, and offices, and doctrines, in your own soul individually, it is in vain that your nominal creed is sound, or that your outward profession and conduct are blameless, so far as the world can see and judge them. It is the life of the soul to have true knowledge of Christ reigning in it, and attracting the soul to *Him*, in submission, and filial love and obedience. This must not be a speculative knowledge merely;—*that*, cannot save you; but a knowledge implanted in the heart by the hand of God the Spirit, and which testifies practically that it is of God, in its leading the soul to hate and to flee from all iniquity, and to seek and cultivate true holiness of the mind within, and of the goings, and conversation, and conduct outwardly. In addressing you farther now from these words, we shall endeavour,

I. To set before you certain considerations to show, that Jesus Christ is the Mighty God; and

II. Make some practical improvement of the view which these considerations shall suggest to us.

I. We shall endeavour to set before you some considerations which go to show that Christ is, as He is called in the words of our text, The Mighty God.

We might well begin this head of discourse, by reminding you of two things. First, That the work assigned to Christ in the counsels of Heaven for the salvation of sinners, required that He who undertook it should be possessed of all the attributes of Deity,—that none other could possibly perfect that work, either in its active duties, or in the sufferings which it implied; and, secondly, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament, when they speak of Christ, ascribe to Him the character and the attributes of God, of which the words of our text form an instance sufficiently clear and explicit, but only one instance from among many others of a similar import. Over these two we shall pass for the present; and as our text specially and directly refers to Christ on earth, and known on earth by His people, born to them as a child, and given unto them as a son, we shall draw the considerations respecting Him which we submit to you, from the proofs which He gave in

His life on earth, in His personal history, that He was indeed the Mighty God, while He also appeared in our nature and likeness.

If we can show that Christ exhibited or exercised in His own person the attributes of Deity, or even any one of them, we apprehend that our argument is good, and our proofs conclusive. We shall endeavour to show, then, that Christ did exercise and exhibit in His person, and character, and works on earth, three special attributes of Deity, namely, the wisdom of God, the power of God, and the goodness of God.

He manifested the wisdom of God to be dwelling in Himself personally, in the first place, by the doctrines He taught. These are such, that human wisdom, or prudence, or skill could never imagine, and could never devise them,—they are such that all human wisdom and knowledge could never discover them, true and manifest as they are, when once made known. These doctrines of Christ we cannot specify one by one, in all their number, but we may bring before you as instances, the elucidations He gives of the moral attributes and perfections of God. These the natural understanding of man could never arrive at knowing correctly, without the aid of revelation from heaven; and though God did give a revelation in the primitive times, yet even among those who received it, the views entertained of

the character of God, were dark comparatively, and imperfect. Christ made them fully known in the lessons which He taught to His disciples and the people—in the instructions He gave to them, and which we have, recorded in the Gospel of truth. The illustrations He gives, again, of the government and the providence of God, show forth His infinite wisdom and knowledge; and the ends and objects of that government and providence He so makes known, and does so prove them to be in accordance with the attributes and character of God, that there is a moral force and persuasion accompanying His illustrations, which carry conviction of one kind even to the mind of the practical unbeliever himself. No subject was more dark and impenetrable to the human mind, than the events continually occurring in the life that now is, and the ends to which they were tending, and the sources from which they flowed. But the Lord Jesus makes manifest that all these events are ruled and governed by almighty God, ordained and permitted by *Him*, and ordered in such a way as to answer and suit the ends of His own infinite wisdom and goodness, and to subserve the cause of His glory. The full and intimate knowledge, again, which Christ showed of the human heart, and which He manifests in His doctrines, clearly shows Him possessed of infinite, unerring, and omniscient wisdom. He lays open

those principles of the human mind to the observation of all who peruse His sayings and doctrines, in such a manner, that the most hardened and daring infidel cannot deny, but there is here displayed a knowledge of the human heart, and of the principles which reign practically by nature in every mind, as far above and beyond the knowledge displayed by every sage and philosopher in ancient times, as to admit of no comparative measurement between them. And the wisdom of Christ is with equal clearness made known in His doctrines and precepts being made so manifestly to bear upon the good of mankind by their being learned and obeyed; there is not one precept of Christ, taking it either by itself or in connexion with His doctrines, on which every precept of His is founded, but will prove itself, even to the natural conscience and understanding of the *sinner*, to be for the good of each individual, and of mankind at large, even in the life that now is, that it were well and fully obeyed. But farther still, Christ exhibited the wisdom of God, in His knowledge of *individual* human character, in His beholding with clearness the inmost thoughts of their hearts; and that, whether they were personally present before Him, or absent at the time from His personal view. The Gospel records to you almost in every chapter or page, numerous instances of this, and in such

a manner as to render it clear that His knowledge of character was omniscient, and His judgment unerringly wise. His words struck conviction to the heart, when he described to individuals their own character and doings. Now, will it be said, that Christ might have all this endowment by inspiration of God, and that He might have it all as a man? No—Can we suppose it possible, say that a mere man might be so inspired and gifted of God—can we suppose it possible that any human being so inspired and favoured would act dishonestly? And would it not be *acting* dishonestly, if he gave not to God the glory—if he did not avow and declare, that it *was* by special inspiration of God. He had all this intelligence, and would God have permitted that the glory due to Himself should be thus given to another? But Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God—He spoke with authority, even His own—He discerned, and pronounced, and judged, on His own authority, and He constrained even His enemies to confess, that He was more than man.

But, again, the power of God was displayed as inherent personally in the Lord Jesus. Of this we scarcely need quote to you instances, for they will occur to every one who knows the history of His personal doings on earth. The wonders and miracles He wrought afford

overwhelming evidence of His divine personal power. Physical, material things were subject to the word of His power. Water was turned into wine, bread was created and multiplied,—the fig-tree was dried up by its roots at the word of His mouth,—the elements of nature were obedient to His voice,—the seas and the winds obeyed Him,—the frame and bodily constitution of man were in like manner obedient to His command,—the most obstinate and grievous diseases fled at His word, and health and strength returned to the body. Life itself returned at His commandment,—the grave was opened, and death yielded his prey, and begun corruption was restored to life and to strength. The powers of darkness, in afflicting the bodies and souls of wretched mortals, could not defy the voice of His power, but were constrained to obey Him, and to acknowledge who He in reality was. All these evidences of His power were accumulated in His personal history. There is a distinction to be made between mere human power, however great it may be, and the power of God, to which we would here crave your attention. Human power must always be exercised, regarding natural objects especially, by the putting forth of some bodily energy,—a mere volition in the mind, of itself, can accomplish nothing, until it is followed up by some physical exertion or move-

ment. With God, the volition itself is sufficient. He wills it, and then it is done; as when He said, "Let there be light: and there was light." This volition, on the part of Christ, He exhibited to be sufficient with *Him*. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. I *will*; *be* thou clean." It is true, that others did work miracles both before, and during, and after the days of Christ upon earth. But all these privileged, and gifted, and miraculously endowed servants of God, wrought miracles in His *name*, and by His *avowed* authority. Christ wrought them in His own name, and expressly by His own authority. In the nature, and in the manner of all the miracles which He wrought, we behold, we are called upon at least to behold, the immediate and almighty power of God residing in Him, and showing, that to Him belongs the glorious title given to Him in the words of our text.

But farther, Christ exhibited in His person and doings the goodness of God. We must carry along with us here the recollection that Christ acted on His own authority as come from God, not for the specific purpose of accomplishing certain or individual acts of goodness, but to make known the character and attributes of God to an ignorant, guilty, and perishing world. There were numerous acts of goodness done by servants of God, in many ages and times of the church. But

they were commissioned and sent forth for that specific purpose, as were Abraham, and Joseph, and Moses, and the judges, and many of the kings and the prophets of old. They testified and avowed their authority, and declared the purposes for which they were thus endowed and commissioned. But Christ came for a purpose and end more large and extensive than the mere performing of individual acts of goodness and kindness done to individual persons, or on special emergencies. He came to manifest in His own person and doings the character of God; and while He showed forth the wisdom and power of God in His personal doings, it was to the end that men might take knowledge of God through Him. He showed forth likewise, and for the same end, the goodness of God, that men might behold it, and might place their confidence *in* God. Christ then, showed Himself to possess the goodness of God in His doing mercy and kindness and favour, to every one who came to Him. The needy suppliant who came, whoever he was, and whatever his past character, however vile and guilty and sinful he may have been, was never sent away unrelieved from the presence of Jesus, when once they applied to Him. All this stands eminently true concerning Christ, in His doings toward the bodily ailments and diseases, and sufferings of those with whom He conversed in His life upon earth. And He showed what was not

formerly known or acted upon, by mere messengers of the Lord who were themselves but men. He confined not this goodness in its exercise to one peculiar nation or people, though His own testimony be, that He was specially sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He did good to all, of whatever nation or kindred they were, who sought unto Him for aid; the poor and needy suppliant was never yet sent away from Him with his petition for mercy and goodness rejected. But it was not only in healing the bodily ailments of human beings, that the goodness of Christ was manifested: it was peculiarly and specially shown, and in a manner which testified most clearly that it was the goodness of God and not of man, in His forgiving the sins of those who sought unto Him for pardoning mercy, under a sense of their guilt and unworthiness. No declarations can be more explicit than those in which Christ declares the forgiveness of sin to sinners, to individuals who came to Him. His enemies were here, right for once, when they said, Who can forgive sins but God? But here, the Mighty God appeared in His person and character and doings, in that He did forgive sins; and by the exercise of His goodness and power accompanying each other in the very utterance of His word pronouncing forgiveness,—the hardness of the human heart, the stubbornness and insensibility of

the sinner, were softened and melted away, and they became, who formerly were under the power of the most alienating and debasing iniquities, followers of God and of Christ in spirit and in truth, and ready to obey and serve Him in all things. Witness the history of Zaccheus for instance; when the word of Christ carried salvation to that man's house, he who formerly was under the power of avarice and covetousness, and spent his life in the practice of extortion; "The half of my goods I give to the poor." Behold the goodness and the mercy of Christ in His turning the heart of another, who was in the most aggravated sense of the term a sinner; till that she sat at the feet of Jesus, washing His feet with her tears, and drying them with the hair of her head. And He Himself bearing the witness concerning her, that she loved much, because much was forgiven her. And behold this goodness still more strikingly displayed, in the very hours of His most fearful and overwhelming agonies on the cross; when He spoke forgiveness and eternal redemption to the hardened and till then impenitent sinner, who now, in his last moments of life, called upon Christ for aid. The gracious reply to him was, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But farther, we behold the goodness of God exemplified and manifested forth in the doings of the Lord Jesus, in that He did good to those, and conferred benefits upon them,

whom He knew to be His enemies. Behold it displayed in His never once avenging Himself by the exercise of His power in commanding judgments, or wrath against those who persecuted, and reviled Him, and treated Him cruelly. He still prayed for their good, and shewed compassion and mercy toward them; as He did with respect to Jerusalem, when He knew that here were His enemies assembled, and contriving in their most determined counsel and plan, how to seize Him and to put Him to death. Beholding the city, He wept over it. And when they did succeed, according to their calculations of cruelty and injustice, and ungodliness of spirit, in destroying seemingly Him whom they hated and persecuted to the death; when He was suffering at their hands all the insult, and degradation, and pain, and affliction, which their barbarous wickedness could inflict, His was not the cry of vengeance against them; but, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

We might, did time permit, bring before you in like manner, the other attributes of the Godhead, as *they* were also eminently displayed in the life and character of Christ. But in what has been advanced, we think there is sufficient evidence to show, that He was what He is said in the words of our text to be, The Mighty God. And we would impress it upon you, my brethren, as the most necessary lesson for your souls to learn,—

that His person and character, not as man, but as God, should be ever and habitually present to your minds,—that in Him, you have, exemplified before you, in a living and personal demonstration on earth, how these attributes reign and rule, and are exercised, in the mind of the eternal and unchangeable God. Christ, being the Mighty God,—in Him there could not be, any variableness or shadow of turning. It was to make manifest to *you*, what God is, in Himself, in the possession and in the exercise of these attributes of His, that Christ lived, and manifested them forth in His life on the earth; while He lived as the covenant head of His people,—to fulfil the law of God in their room,—He went about doing good,—to show forth and to testify to all generations, what God is,—that your hopes might be placed in Him, and that according to the invitations and offers of the glorious Gospel, you might come unto Him, and experience His saving goodness and power in the same manner as these were shown forth by Christ on earth, and exercised by Him, towards the guilty, the perishing, the poor and the needy.

II. The practical improvement of the subject we have been thus shortly considering—the character of Christ as the Mighty God, is, that we should hasten to submit our souls unto Him, to receive His offered benefits to us as sinners, with grat-

itude of soul, and with godly zeal, that we should strive to honour Him, and to sanctify His name in our hearts. A believing view of Christ, as He is God and man, is the primary element, it is the true foundation,—the essential principle of all vital and practical godliness. In Him, God is made known to us. In Him, we behold that God is gracious to sinners as we are: and in Him we have abundant and satisfying proof, that whatever our past transgressions have been, we are now permitted and called upon to draw near to Him; and in Christ the assurance is given us, that we shall, coming unto Him, in no wise be cast out. But, to be ignorant of Christ, in His person and character, and offices, is the death of the soul: every idea you form of God, every one thought you may have concerning Him, when you recognise Him not as manifested in Christ,—when you consider not, that Christ is God Himself who hath *made* Himself *known*, in His life and doings on earth—must be a vague and a shapeless idea, which may float in the head, and which may occasionally perhaps strike terror into the conscience; but it cannot impress the heart savingly or to profit; and far less can it bring the soul to God, either in contrition for sin, or in true desire to be delivered from sin, or to be conformed to the likeness or image of God. You cannot, my friends, ever once have that heavenly and godly principle, the

love of God, implanted in your souls, until you behold the character of God, as it is manifested in the Lord Jesus,—until you believe and know, that this Jesus is Himself verily God,—and that it is with Him you have to do, as God and the Saviour; —that it is to Him, who is both God and the Saviour of sinners you are invited to come, by the message of reconciliation which the Gospel sets before you. Seek, therefore, from God, that He would enlighten your souls in the knowledge of Christ. As Christ, who is the Mighty God, came unto the world, taking upon Himself personally, the working out and the purchasing of salvation for sinners, and as He perfected in righteousness the work given Him by the Father to do, His own mighty power as God sustaining Him in the fearful work of making atonement for sin; so He Himself assures you in the word of His truth, that the Holy Spirit is willing to come unto you; and He being also God, He is able to enlighten you in the knowledge of Christ, spiritually, effectually, and savingly,—to overcome in your soul, whatever exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and turns you away in your practice, from considering the things which belong to your everlasting peace. Your mind must be subdued into an obedience to the call and invitation which the Gospel gives to you,—to learn of Christ, and to behold *in Him* the character and the glory of God

made known to you. My friends, consider, how, in your practice, you are estranged from all this solemn and important, and spiritual consideration and view. Think, now, how totally the world and its vanities occupy your heart and affections, to the exclusion from your mind of suitable reflections and views, concerning the guilt and danger of your souls through sin, in the presence of God. Can you be saved in this heedless and careless—in this hardened state of heart and of feelings, and in this sad and fearful indifference to the interests of your own souls and to the glory of God? Surely you cannot. And while it is made so manifest to you, that the mighty God Himself came to seek and to save you,—that He took unto Himself your very form and your likeness to make atonement for sin, and to reveal unto you His own glorious perfections,—when there was none other that could deliver or save you,—O! consider, while yet it is called to-day, how can you escape if you neglect so great salvation. And believe it, my friends, it is not a hearsay knowledge of this glorious Saviour, which can be the means of itself, to bring to you the blessings of the salvation of Christ; but that view and knowledge of Him being impressed on your heart and conscience, and soul, in such manner and measure, as would make you to consider Him, and the message of His love to you in the Gospel, as the

one thing needful; above all other matters precious to *you*. Rest not satisfied in calling Him Lord, Lord. Come unto Him, for the exercise of that power toward you, which dwelleth with Him, and with His blessed Spirit of truth, and which when put forth, converts the soul to God, and builds it up in holiness and in comfort, through faith, unto eternal salvation. To you who seek to know and to follow Christ, the subject of our text is calculated to afford the strongest, the most substantial comfort, and encouragement, and consolation, and hope. Do you feel, that in yourselves you have nothing to build upon, nothing of which to make claim with God for His mercy and grace?—Then, behold here the mighty God Himself taking compassion upon you, even from eternal ages, and humbling Himself into the likeness and form of a servant, that He might be a fit Saviour for you, that you might behold the glorious treasures of His everlasting love, and that love manifested to those who were guilty and condemned—the children of disobedience, and the heirs of eternal wrath. He did not commit or entrust the business of your redemption to others. When none other aid could aid you, He Himself undertook for you—even the mighty God, now constituted by the unchangeable counsels of Heaven, the Saviour of sinners as you are. It is to *Him*, in all the fulness of His Godhead

attributes that you are invited to come. It is He who suffered for your sins, in His human body, and in His reasonable soul, which He took unto Himself, that He might obey the law in your room, and that He might for you endure its awful penalty: It is upon Him you are called to look, suffering, the just for the unjust, that He might bring sinners as you are to God. And follow the contemplation of His glorious character to where He now reigns in the fulness and glory of all His eternal attributes, for the very end of securing eternal salvation, purchased by His blood, to such perishing sinners as you feel yourselves to be. He regards your condition. He beheld and foreknew it even from eternity; and He provided in Himself for your full and complete deliverance. Whatever of heavenly wisdom, and power, and goodness, you stand in need of receiving, shall be exercised toward you, for the pardon of sin, for the healing of your soul's spiritual maladies,—for the securing to you of a blessed and glorious inheritance in the heavens. Hath not Christ given you proof, and does He not place that proof distinctly and plainly before you, that He will exercise this for you? Behold what He did on the earth—what He continually did, to all those who sought unto Him; and He is ever and unchangeably the same. But you feel that you cannot conquer your own sins, that you

cannot work any change in your evil, polluted nature; that you cannot raise yourselves into the exercises, or enjoyment, or privileges, or liberty of spiritual life, as the true children of God. Christ the Mighty God, *He* is your life: in Him there is life, and it is invested in Him, as your God and your Saviour, for you, that you might have it, and have it more abundantly. He liveth; and because He lives, you shall live also. When He dwelt among men, did He not perform the most astonishing wonders? Did He not give life to the dead themselves? and spiritual life also to the spiritually dead, blotting out their transgressions, and quickening their souls by His mighty power as God? Being put to death in the flesh, He is declared to be the Son of God, yea God Himself, with power, by His resurrection from the dead, and by His ascension into heaven, where He has been manifesting ever since, till this day, that He rules and governs for the good of sinners, to make them His own people, subduing their enemies under them. The adorable title ascribed to Him in the words of our text; that, He has most eminently and signally displayed in His conquest of all His and your spiritual enemies. Your soul you feel to be under the dominion of sin. Seek to put it into His gracious and almighty hands, for cure and deliverance. He hath, as the mighty God, overcome Satan and sin. He

hath deprived them of their dominion, overturning the very foundations of their kingdom in the minds of sinners as you are; and opening the way for overturning them also, even in your soul individually. He hath spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross. He is able and willing to vanquish now in your soul, all those corrupt and evil affections which war against its interests, and against the cause of His own service and glory. How cheerfully, then, ought you to betake yourselves unto Him, to commit your cause to His care, and to confide in His atonement, in His grace, and in His government, over all the spiritual, and over all the natural world, as the Mighty God your Saviour. What is there with you that can be too hard for the Lord, this Mighty God, to subdue it? You look to the hardship and the difficulty of your own case. If the Lord have truly opened your eyes, we wonder not that you do this. But O, my friends, seek that the eyes of your minds were directed also to Him whom God hath anointed to be unto you, your righteousness and your strength, and who is exalted with God in the heavens, in His divine character as God, and in His distinct personality as God and man, in both natures, to be to you a faithful and merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God, and to be the Head of His own body the church,

ruling over it, defending it by His power from every enemy and from every snare; watching over your interests in His omniscience, and in the exercise of His love, and pledged, Himself, as the mighty God of truth, that He will never leave nor forsake you.

SERMON XXIII.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

The Everlasting Father.

THE title given to Christ in these words merits our serious and solemn consideration. We are aware that it may appear to some, as if presenting a difficulty, to reconcile its application to Christ with the doctrine of His distinct personality in the Godhead. Christ Himself declares, that He and the Father are one,—one, in counsel, in purpose, in acting: and one, in the possession and in the exercise of all the glorious and perfect attributes which constitute true deity. That Christ and the Father are one, does not therefore argue against the distinct personality of the Son. But He Himself receiving as here, directly and plainly the title of "Everlasting Father," still may appear, as if tending to obscure the doctrine of Christ's personal subsistence in Deity.

That doctrine, however, we must hold as one of those truths essential to salvation,—even the distinct personality of the Son of God. It is that in the reception of which, in the true belief of which the Christian has the most cheering and substantial encouragement and strength habitually afforded him. It is a special doctrine of Scripture on which the believer's comfort and strength are established;—and to its habitual influence and spiritual use in the believer's mind, Christ Himself undoubtedly refers, when He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Christ's oneness with the Father signifies, in the Scriptures, His equality with the Father in all the attributes of Deity,—the essential, eternal, and unspeakable union of equality and of love subsisting in the persons of Deity, and the oneness and unchangeableness of their purposes and counsels. All this argues not against the personal subsistence of Christ, or His distinct personality. And when the title given to Christ in the words of our text is duly considered, it may be seen, that instead of tending to obscure, or in any way

to perplex the believer's mind on the subject of Christ's personal existence and reign in heaven, it is specially calculated to strengthen and confirm the soul in the faith of Christ, looking *unto* Him as the anointed of God, in His mediatorial offices, and fulfilling all those offices, the adorable and living Head of His own body the church. The term translated into our language, as used in the text, "Everlasting Father," we may remark, is literally in the original,—The Father of eternity: and the word eternity there used, is frequently found to signify, ages or generations to come, or a world to come;—so that it might be rendered, as indeed it has been, into other languages,—His name shall be called "The Father of the world to come." And what that world to come signifies, we have sufficient evidence of, in other portions of Scripture. It signifies the church of God on earth,—constituted by all that which the Gospel reveals being ordained and accomplished. "The world to come," also signifies the inheritance which Christ purchased for the church, and which it seeks for, and hopes for, through Him. We shall direct your attention to certain passages of Scripture, in which the term, "The world to come," manifestly signifies the Gospel church, with its constitution, its membership, and its eternal prospects, through Christ Jesus. In the epistle to the Hebrews ii. 5, we read, "For

unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come,"—that is the Gospel church, its constitution, and spiritual membership, and its interests. These have not been entrusted to angels, but to Christ, as the living Head of the church. And in Hebrews vi. 5, "And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,"—that is, the spiritual influences which are purchased by Christ to the Gospel church, and some of which in a certain measure and way might be experienced, even by those who attained not to ultimate salvation. And in Ephes. ii. 7. "That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." The import of the term "ages to come," in this last cited passage, is too obvious to call for any remark. We have only farther to observe, that the church of Christ is *rightly* denominated a new world, new ages, or a world to come, compared with what the whole world would be without a Saviour being ordained and revealed; because the very nature of this church, spiritually considered and viewed, is, its possessing a new life, and all the immortal prospects connected with that life, which the whole of mankind had forfeited and lost, in the first Adam. In Adam, all died; in Christ all His true people are made spiritually alive: they receive through Christ, for His sake, and

from Him, as the gift of His purchase, spiritual life to their souls, and a spiritual, eternal, and glorious kingdom. It is called a world to come, or a new world, also, in contra-distinction to the state of all those who are not partakers of spiritual life through Jesus Christ. The latter have their only portion in this life,—*their* world, *their* inheritance, is already come,—it consists in the things which are seen and temporal. But the true and full inheritance of the people of Christ is yet to come: and while they enjoy even here, blessings, and privileges, and joys unspeakable, which the unrenewed know not of, and which the world that now is cannot give, and cannot take away, yet the fulness and consummation of their blessings are to be realized in a world that is yet to come, and which shall only be revealed in *all* its fulness of glory and blessedness and joy, when "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens (now visible) shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works which are therein shall be burned up." "Nevertheless," says the apostle Peter, "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Now, the title in our text given to Christ, "the everlasting Father," or, the Father of the world to come,—or

of the ages to come, implies, that He, in His offices and mediatorship, is the author of all spiritual blessings to His people. He is, in His distinct personality, while in all the essential and glorious attributes of deity one with God the Father Himself, the Father, of all His spiritual posterity —of every one of His people,—the author of their eternal salvation; and from Him, they derive spiritual life, with all its blessings; and He has that immortal glory and blessedness in heaven, which He will bestow upon them, and for the enjoyment of which throughout eternal ages, He will fit them, in their sojourn here, and by all the steps His wisdom and His faithfulness see fit, to train and tutor their spirits within them, till He conduct them finally into the immediate presence of God in the kingdom above.

But we have farther to observe, that though the translation in our text be not literal, and not perhaps guiding the mind at first sight, so directly to view the distinct personality of the Son, as a literal translation might have done; yet, it is substantially correct, conducting to the conclusion we have been remarking upon; when we view it in connexion with the preceding, and especially the initial part of this verse. The passage, in the spirit of prophecy, is the language of the true church of Christ,—"Unto *us* a child is born; unto *us*, a Son is given,"—and it is to

them,—to the true church, that He is known under the titles which the remaining clauses proceed to state,—and *to them*, His name shall be the everlasting Father,—*their* Father, in all ages to come, even throughout eternity itself. All the members of that church, shall know Christ as their Father,—the author, the procurer, the bestower upon them of that life, that new spirit of mind which they receive; and in the everlasting exercise of which they shall ever continue to know Him and to love Him, and to glorify Him,—" Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This title, then, being applicable to Christ, with reference to His people or church, and in His offices as the Mediator, we shall endeavour to set before you farther, a few of those particular respects, in which the title is applicable to *Him*, and in which, it is necessary for eternal salvation, that you, individually, should know and honour Him.

In the first place, Christ is the Father, or author, of spiritual life in the souls of His people; and in that respect an everlasting Father.

God created man in His own image,—in the image of God created He him. And the amount of what the Scriptures inform us concerning that

image is, that it consisted in knowledge, and righteousness, and holiness. This image was the life of man, his spiritual life. As soon as he sinned he lost this life;—not only his title to possess it longer, but he actually lost possession of it. Knowledge of God he no longer possessed,—righteousness he possessed no longer; and holiness, purity, the consecration of all his faculties and powers to God, the desire and the ability to serve God only, and to serve Him perfectly, he also lost, becoming the slave of sin in his soul, subject to its power. We behold, by the testimony of Scripture, that whenever man fell, and thus lost his spiritual life, God interposed, revealing Himself gracious, through Christ Jesus,—the revelation and promise of a Saviour were given; and this knowledge could not have been vouchsafed but only through the grace which dwelt eternally with God, and in which Christ did undertake from eternal ages, to be the surety and Father of His people. The counsels of grace had been established in the heavens before the world began. Christ was the Father of His people, to bestow spiritual life upon them, from eternal ages. This is expressly declared concerning Him, in the spirit of revelation and prophecy;—"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.—While as yet He had not

made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. Now, therefore, hearken unto me, O ye children; for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Christ, in all this, makes it manifest, that from eternity the counsels of salvation were ordained and established, and *He* appointed to be the light of the world, that through Him true wisdom, true knowledge of God should be communicated; and had not that counsel *been*, man, in all his successive generations, would be left to perish in ignorance of God, and cut off from all

the blessings of spiritual and eternal life. All the knowledge of God communicated to the fallen, sinful, children of men, we must consider as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ,—through Him, not as a person of the glorious Godhead, merely, but also anointed to be the Saviour of sinners, and the author and Father of life to their souls, restoring the knowledge of God to them, and bringing them to possess it as the very beginning of spiritual and eternal life. And, though the Scriptures of truth be but lightly esteemed by too many of those who are privileged with receiving them; there is not a page of them all, nor a truth declared in them all, of which the communication to us is not the purchase of Christ. It is the gift of His purchase that they are given you;—they are they which testify of Christ, and of the way of salvation through Him; and all those who refuse their instruction and counsel, must eternally perish, not being brought unto Christ, or united to *Him* as the author of life to their souls, through the testimony of His truth applied to the conscience and heart. And we would here observe, while these means of knowledge are fully given to you,—that to you they do not bring life, so long as they do not bring you to Christ,—so long as you remain insensible of your need of *Him*, and of receiving spiritual life *from* Him,—so long as you

deem, that *having* the Scriptures merely, and the outward means of their communication, you are safe and well. Their object and use are, to bring you to the Lord Jesus, seeking life through Him, seeking to be made obedient *to Him*, in the spirit of your minds, His children and followers in truth. Christ is the everlasting Father of the church, in His mediatorial capacity and offices, as purchasing this revelation of Himself, and of God manifested by Him. It is by the grace of faith that every believing soul is united to Christ; and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." To have this word of God in your hands, is not the knowledge of God, but the means of communicating true spiritual knowledge of Him to the mind,—that essential principle of spiritual life, which all of us have lost in the first Adam. And when the means of knowledge are thus bestowed, it becomes our business and our interest to seek for the knowledge itself through these means of God's appointment. Now, the Scriptures make manifest, that to the having and possessing of this, there must be a new spiritual principle created in the soul, even the grace or principle of faith; and the word directs us to ask this from God. And it is here that Christ is truly the Father of His people in a spiritual sense. In ourselves we are unworthy either to ask or receive this, or any other spiritu-

al gift or blessing. As we have lost knowledge of God in Adam, so have we lost our righteousness. We are guilty before God, and condemned by His justice because of sin,—the sin that is in us, and which, according to our fallen state, rules habitually over us. But Christ has purchased a righteousness for us. The law of God which we had violated, He came as the surety of His people, and fulfilled it in their behalf. The sin which is naturally in them, the sins which they have committed,—for these He suffered all the punishment which they deserved from God: and *because of* His doings and sufferings each one of you is permitted and invited to come to God, seeking from Him, the grace or principle of faith, that you might have the true knowledge of God established in your soul. And for the sake of Christ's righteousness, His people do receive true faith in God, and saving knowledge of Him. For the sake of Christ's doings and sufferings, the Spirit of God comes to their souls, and establishes this principle of faith within them. They were till then, all of them, aliens to God, till this faith is established within them. But Christ has opened the way of access with Heaven; and they who receive this faith, have thereby access *to* heaven, and intercourse with God, in a spiritual and saving manner. This is the very life of their soul, and Christ is the Fath-

er, the everlasting Author of that life. To *Him* they owe it, and to Him it leads them; and to *Him* it unites them, as the Lord their righteousness and their strength. As He is essentially God, they behold God manifested in Him; they know and they trust in God as He is manifested in Christ, for every spiritual and eternal blessing. When they feel sin prevailing against them, they are taught and influenced by faith, to come to Christ for strength and ability to overcome sin. He who is known of them in faith, encourages and invites them to look to Himself, as the author and bestower of every good and perfect gift. Their *resort* is to Him. In themselves they have no strength, and no safety; but in Christ, they have strength, and *all* safety bestowed upon them. When the very principles of spiritual life in their soul, even after it has been established there, are weakened, and as if ready to die away, they are supported by Him; and through the consecrated way of His meritorious righteousness, the Spirit of God abides *with* them, and quickens the soul anew to look to Christ; and *in* looking to Him, knowing Him anew, they receive strengthening power. And thus in Christ, who is their Father, they have holiness restored to them. Sin shall not have dominion over them; spiritual death shall not reign in them, because Christ is their life. He has purchased their souls, that He might be

to them a Father, bestowing upon them the principles and benefits of spiritual and eternal life: He came, and He suffered, and now He reigns in heaven, that they might have this life, and have it more abundantly. He is therefore their Father in terms of the eternal covenant. As from Adam we all derive natural life, and the principles of sin, so from Christ do His people derive spiritual life, and the principles of grace and holiness.

But, in the second place, Christ is the everlasting Father of His people, or church, when we consider the properties of that life which He bestows.

The sum and end of spiritual life are, a conformity of the soul to the will and to the image of God. It is the communicating to the souls of men, of that eternal life which is in God Himself. In other words, the spiritual life which Christ bestows upon His people, is, the likeness and image of God Himself in His imitable perfections; and hence it has been frequently and justly called, the life of God in the soul of man. None could bestow this, but one who Himself is God. None could purchase a gift of such eternal value, but one who Himself was God. Christ has purchased it. The life which he has as God, He has in all fulness dwelling in Him personally as the mediator, to bestow it upon His people. And in its very beginnings in the soul, it is known as a new,

a spiritual, and a godly life; in its enabling the soul to consent to the will and commandments of God, that they are just, and reasonable, and perfect, and good. When any individual soul is quickened into spiritual life, through the incipient knowledge of God operating in the mind, and leading it to contemplate and consider the character of God himself; it is often, if not always, with fear and trembling, the mind beholds the length and the breadth, the strictness and perfection of those requirements which the holy law of God makes, in the obedience which it demands. But though the awakened soul trembles at its own guilt in violating this perfect and holy law, and feels its own utter inability to meet and fulfil its requirements; yet it consents to all the law, that it is holy, and just, and good. And we would beseech all professing Christians, to examine their own hearts on this important and solemn subject; whether you have yet been brought thus to approve in your conscience, and heart, and soul, the whole law of God. "I esteem *all* thy precepts concerning *all* things to be right," says the godly psalmist, and "therefore," he adds, "I hate every false way." This is the very nature of spiritual life in the soul; and it is this which *proves* that there *is* spiritual life communicated to it—that the soul verily is made partaker of the same Spirit which was also in Christ Jesus.

You may satisfy yourselves without ascertaining whether such now be your state; but if so, you deceive your own souls. It is true, the believer finds another disposition working still in his mind, which is opposed to the law and commandments of God; and which he feels too often leading him to forget and to disobey them: but he has at the same time, if indeed a true believer, this holy principle now implanted in the mind—this living principle from Christ its everlasting Father, which approves every commandment of God, and witnesses on their side habitually, and seeks to be conformed to them. And this spiritual principle, cannot have rest, or quiet, or comfort, in any habit, or in any act of willing disobedience. It is a living principle, and it cannot be destroyed: it will go on and increase in its holy operation, because it is derived from the very being of God Himself. It will incline the believer to seek conformity to the commandments of Christ—earnestly to pursue holiness of heart and of life. While the believer feels continually, and with sorrow and pain, his own continual short-comings, and is broken in heart, and grieved in mind, for the constant abounding of sin in his soul, in his heart, and words, and conduct—he still presses onward in seeking deliverance from sin; and though weary and heavy laden, he defers not coming to Christ

for life, and for life more abundantly. This is evidence that the new principle in his soul is the gift of God—that God is its author—that there is bestowed upon him of the very life inherent in Christ; and thus he stands connected with Christ, not in virtue of any thing naturally in the believer himself, but by the abounding grace of God, which ordained such a life to be given; by the abounding love and eternal power of Christ, who purchased this life for him, that he might have and enjoy its blessings and glory for ever; and by the eternal sovereignty of Christ, as God and the mediator, which He exercises in heaven, that every individual of His chosen people might have this life;—and by the abounding love and power of the eternal Spirit who quickens the soul to understand of its excellency, and to behold Christ as its eternal Father.

But it is not alone in the mind of the believer *consenting* to, and approving the whole law of God, that the nature of this spiritual life is manifested. It is manifested in the strength and activity which it bestows on the mind, with respect to spiritual objects. With what indifference and coldness does the natural mind hear of spiritual objects, and truths, and doctrines, and prospects! With what deadness and insensibility of heart, does the unbeliever enter into any spiritual service, or engage in any habitual duty pertaining to godliness; nay,

with what reluctance and marked dislike, does he permit himself to be dragged along to the cultivation of any stated ordinance, in which God is to be sought, or acknowledged, or honoured! With what marked enmity and aversion does he at all give heed to such things, even when the voice of conscience proclaims his need to him. That voice may urge the lesson, of his guilt,—but the voice is bitterness to his alienated, and earthly polluted soul; testifying to *him*, alas! that he is alienated from God, that the life of God is not with him. But the soul quickened by the Spirit of God, made spiritually alive in Christ, and to Christ, seeks earnestly His service, and desires to have intercourse with Him. The strength of this new and spiritual principle of life manifests itself, in making the soul thus willing and anxious to have intercourse with Christ, and to receive more and more abundantly from Him, what would unite the whole mind more closely *to* Him, as its Father, and Saviour, and God. This principle is continually proving itself to be of God by its overcoming the obstacles which oppose the seeking of God in truth; and by its striving to live in love to God, and in the obedience which is due to Him. Indeed the believer may still find, the evil dispositions of an earthly mind seeking ascendancy in his bosom, and trying to lead him to a denial of God even in his practice,—this

he habitually feels and mourns,—and it often fills him with fear, and sorrow, and self-reproach,—but with all this, the heavenly principle, of which Christ is the eternal Father, manifests its strength in making opposition and head, and in continually testifying, against this law of sin and death which by nature operates: and indeed, the strength and power of spiritual life are thus made more manifest, than if there had been no such obstacles to encounter. And to every one of the true people of God, there will come help and strength from above;—"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: He is their strength in time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them." "Be thou faithful unto death," and Christ the eternal Father of this spiritual life in your soul, promises, "I will give thee the crown of life." Now, it is through the glorious person, through the offices, through the finished work, through the reign of Christ in heaven as the living head of His church, that all this is begun, conducted, and finished. Had He not been from eternal ages anointed of God to that work and those offices, all His people would have perished in spiritual and eternal death;—the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience would have continued to rule over them, and they to obey that cruel sway; they would continue to dishonour God by a total neglect of *Him*, and

to ruin themselves by a total neglect of their own spiritual and eternal interests. With what gratitude of soul, then, ought every one who has thus been quickened, to look to Christ; with what increasing admiration and love, does it become you to consider *Him* the author of eternal salvation; and with what renovated courage and zeal does it become you to be animated,—when you have assured ground to believe that this work in your mind, this establishment of a principle which wars against sin, is of Himself, that *He* is its author and Father; and that He invites you to seek and to receive *from Himself*, its increase and its growing ascendancy; and that He assuredly and faithfully promises to bestow such increase upon you.

But, in the third place, Christ is the eternal Father of His people in their spiritual life, because, in the exercise of His eternal attributes as God, He continually cares for each one of them.

He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without beginning of days or end of life. If you be among the number of His people, who have indeed received from Him spiritual life, be it yet but in its very beginnings weak and imperfect, the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places, yea, ye have a goodly heritage in *Him*. *He* takes care of your interests, He will supply your wants, He will instruct and counsel and guide you, He will pre-

serve you from evil, He will uphold your soul in times of danger, temptation and trial. He is bringing you into a fitness for the purchased inheritance, training you up under His own Fatherly care, that you may enjoy its full blessings and honour and glory, for ever. He will discharge towards you all the offices of a faithful and wise, a loving and affectionate Father. That purpose of grace by which Christ undertook the redemption and care of His people, do not consider as if it were subject to variableness or shadow of turning. The more you examine into its nature, the more will the grounds of your confidence in Him be enlarged. His, is an eternal love, dwelling without beginning, without diminution, and not subject to change, in the eternal mind of your glorious Redeemer; and with all the divine persons of the glorious Godhead. In that love and purpose of grace, He and His Father are one; and with *them* the Holy Spirit is one; all purposing, ordaining, and executing the full, blessed preparation of the Gospel of peace. The Lord Jesus, in His office as your Mediator, and living Head, possesses omniscient knowledge, accompanying that, love towards you which passeth all knowledge. There is not one specialty or peculiarity of your condition with respect to all the feared obstacles which oppose His living grace, the divine life in your soul, with which He is not intimately acquainted. And

He who is the everlasting author of that life in you, is moreover your elder brother in all the distresses, in all the afflictions which can outwardly come upon you; in that He Himself trode affliction's path for your sake. He endured them all, that He might be unto you as a brother, to have a fellow-feeling with all your infirmities, and with all your temptations and dangers. It was not alone to purchase life for you; though that indeed was its most special end,—He trode that path; but also to encourage your soul in the difficulties and trials through which you must pass; that you might believe in Him, and trust to Him, as the blessed Immanuel who is God in your nature, now ruling in the heavens, made perfect by sufferings on the earth, as your Mediator and friend; to make known to you, by sensible demonstration, that no power of sin, no principalities or powers of darkness can ever prevail against Him, or alter His gracious purposes: and if He in His eternal love consented so to humble Himself, as to take unto Him your likeness and form; if He humbled Himself to contend with the powers of darkness, and to overcome them for your sake; how shall He not also, in the exercise of the same love and condescension, seeing that He is unchangeable and eternal in all His attributes, have respect to you, in your weak and tried, and perplexed conditions, whatever they be. You are continually

before Him, and your state is the object of His wise and gracious and peculiar care. If there be spiritual life commenced in your soul, that life is His; and on the foundation of all His eternal and unchangeable attributes your safety is rested; and on this glorious foundation let your hopes be built. But is He not in all His dealing towards you, seeking to lead and draw you nearer to Himself, in a believing, realizing view of His excellency and His glory? Is He not proving to your own experience, that you cannot prosper in spiritual life, without nearness *to* Him in such believing views? Is He not teaching your soul, that every means, and every effort of yours can be only futile and dead without your beholding Him as the strength and life of your soul, at each and every step of your progress? You are receiving in His testimony of truth, every possible encouragement to seek His face and to wait upon Him, for the communications of His spirit to your soul, to enlighten you in the knowledge of Him as your everlasting Father, the author of every true and active desire you have experienced, that you may be conformed to His will, and live to the glory of God, and inherit His kingdom. Seek to Him in your weakness, and fears, and oppressions of mind. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth

judgment unto truth." Contemplate your prospects and safety in the light of His gracious countenance; flee from sin, and seek His strength to overcome its workings and habits within you. He will uphold you by the right hand of His righteousness, and will bestow upon you the wisdom and knowledge, more and more to discern the path of duty with clearness, strength to maintain that path, courage to oppose your spiritual enemies, and ascendency in your soul of holy affections, to make you faithful to *Him*, even unto death.

SERMON XXIV.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

"*The Everlasting Father.*

THE observations which we have already been making upon this important subject, went to show the fitness of this title as belonging to Christ, and the intimacy of that relation in which each one of His people stands to *Him*, as individuals of His church on earth, in whom there are established, by His abounding grace, the principles of spiritual life. That life is manifested by its nature, and exercise, and habits, to be of God; and as certainly as it is so, it is evident, that it cannot be otherwise received than as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, to the soul. None of mankind deserved the gift, none of them could purchase it, and it is very evident to every truly awakened and enlightened mind, that none by natural capacity or power could establish it in themselves, and

equally unable were they to make it predominant or triumphant, in face of the many and formidable obstacles, and enemies, and dangers, that continually oppose its progress. This feeling or experience, those who are truly seeking salvation cannot but have. They have learned in some measure the nature and guilt of sin, in themselves, that it brings as its wages the forfeiture of God's favour,—and more impressively still, they experience, that it disables the soul from serving God, —that its constant tendency is to withdraw the soul in all its affections and powers from God. While sin is charged against the sinner by the just and righteous judgment of God, he cannot have access to His favour: and neither has any individual soul in its own experience, access to God with true encouragement, or confidence, or hope, after it has been at all awakened to perceive its *need* of His favour, until it is enabled to look to Christ as the sacrifice for sin, which God, in His infinite wisdom and love provided, and in which His justice is satisfied. To any individual so awakened, and so enlightened in mind, nothing can by any possibility be more clear, than that salvation really consists in the receiving of a new heart,—new dispositions and desires, and affections, and strength, to contend with sin in the mind, and to prevail against it. This heart, and these dispositions, they therefore seek to receive, and desire to cherish. But their own

wishes and desires are found, in practice, to be ineffectual and unavailing; for they still feel that sin is abounding with them. They clearly apprehend, habitually, the misery of such a state; in themselves, they are taught by experience to have no hope, to deliver themselves, either from the power, or from the deceitfulness of sin: it overtakes and conquers them at every step; and in every duty, they feel it to be, as if by far the predominant element. In such a state they cannot rest satisfied; and yet in every renewed effort they do but meet with disappointment and mortification. There may be still indeed in all this, much of a proud and self-righteous spirit: the predominant wish still, may be, to commend themselves to God. But when the mind is effectually and truly awakened unto righteousness, that spirit will be rebuked, by the mind receiving clear and forcible demonstration of the folly and sinfulness of all such attempts: it will be brought to feel that there is necessary for it, a higher power than its own to establish within the soul, those spiritual and godly principles, which would have strength and power and permanency, to resist sin, and to effect some degree of a real separation from its ruling power. And it is in this condition, that the mind will be led to seek its life and its spiritual strength from Christ, receiving with gratitude the testimony concerning *Him* which the Gospel conveys; and with what adoring gratitude

ought that testimony to be received, when *He* is held forth to you, as in the words of our context and text, by every designation and title calculated to encourage your confidence in Him as the author of eternal salvation to sinful beings as you are! And if you truly have had the experience which we have now been describing, surely it is with fervent thankfulness you will magnify the name of God, and sanctify Him in your hearts, when you feel and know that He has made such gracious and abundant provision for your lost and perishing soul in Christ Jesus,—that in Christ there are not only all the attributes of deity centred; but that these in all their fulness and glory He possesses, and is invested with power and sovereignty to exercise them for the purpose of bestowing the principles of spiritual life upon you.

We would solemnly make appeal here, to each individual in our hearing, whether *you* have *experienced* that your salvation consists in your receiving a new life from the Lord, new principles and desires, and affections of mind, to render you a child of God in truth, devoted to Him, and to the cause of His glory? If you have not discovered this; then surely, to you the gospel message must still be hidden, it must be to you a dead letter, as to all its actual tenor. And in such a state we would earnestly intreat you not longer to rest satisfied,—with having a name to live, with being nominally of the people of God, while in heart

and mind you are not seeking, not even desiring to become the children of the Most High. What can be more explicit than the declaration of Christ Himself? What more solemn and certain than His own declaration;—and what more impressively clear? "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. What more clearly than this can point out salvation to be the receiving of a new mind and heart! And what more clearly *may* be known to you, in your own experience, did you give heed to the state of your own mind upon the subject, than that an aversion to spiritual objects and considerations is the cause why you have even till this day remained without seeking in truth from God, that He would quicken you into newness of life? O, consider, that this melancholy and grievous fact, so legibly written and recorded in your own mind's history, is the very cause why a new nature is so essentially necessary for you. And remember, we beseech you, and lay it to heart, that for you to call Christ *your* Saviour, and to imagine that He is so, while He is not to you yet the author of spiritual life in your soul, is to imagine an inconsistency:—that you now really have the benefit of any one of His offices, or of any part of His finished work, without your being in connexion actually with Him, in the bestowment upon you of spiritual life, is to deceive

your soul in views which are entirely contrary to all the Gospel's declarations and statements. "As many as *received* Him," the Gospel assures us, "to *them* gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." And the apostle Paul, in addressing those who had become the true people of God, says to them, Ephes. ii. 1—6. "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were *dead* in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Now, we do deem it impossible for any reasonable or rational being, to look at these passages, admitting them to be the truth of God, and not to perceive, that salvation does truly consist, in a great and effectual change passing upon the whole inward man: and without specifying particular passages of the Gospel record at all, but bidding

you look to all its general tenor and scope,—to the doctrines and declarations of Christ,—to the history which it gives of all that happened after His ascension to heaven, in the hearts and lives of those who received the Gospel, to the descriptions it gives of their renewed state, and character, and conduct, to the exhortations and counsels delivered to *such* persons, under the inspiration of God—to follow on to know the Lord, and to grow and increase in the exercise of that new life which they had received;—we bid you look to all that authority, and will it not present to your own conscience and heart an accumulation of the clearest and most forcible evidence, that salvation does consist in your receiving new and spiritual principles to be influential in your soul, and to make you as individuals, the people of God in truth; this full testimony must unquestionably bring home, if duly considered, even to the natural conscience the truth of what the Gospel also so clearly and pointedly affirms;—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Such are not particular or peculiar views entertained by *some* Christians, and not entertained by others; but they are the doctrines of godliness, the essential doctrines which *are* received, and cultivated, and cherished, and *felt* to be true, by all who truly receive the Gospel as the charter of their sal-

vation, of whatever outward denomination or name they may be, in the whole Christian world. And O, could we but win the solemn attention, the serious care of your minds to these things, then would we have hope, that "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, did shine in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ." That carelessness, that insensibility of mind, to what the word of God really declares, which you must confess obtains prevalence in your general habits,—that will prove the ruin of your souls, if you continue to cherish it, or to permit it, or to consent to its continuing, its reign over you. And how, my friends, can we be but impressed with this view of the matter, and not seek earnestly and solemnly to impress it upon *you*, when we reflect, that every means of the Gospel's ministration to you, whether in private or public, is just a revealing of the testament or will of Christ the everlasting Father of His church, in which He offers Himself to you, and all the benefits of His eternal salvation; and that every renewed act on your part, by which you put this testimony away from you, not giving heed to its import and application to yourselves individually, is in real amount, an act of refusal, in which you contract guilt, and in which your danger is fearfully increased. The prospect is fearful, when we think of

human souls rejecting their own best, and their only enduring inheritance;—alive to every other pursuit, but dead and insensible to what most essentially, and eternally concerns them. And while God is dealing mercifully with you, as reasonable beings, by the very bestowal of His word upon you, that you might give heed to the things which concern your peace, that your attention might be turned to them, and your minds brought into the knowledge of the truth, and to the obedience of its gracious invitations, it is more than melancholy, it is oppressively sad, to see every power of mind that God bestows, devoted to every other pursuit, but studiously turned away from the considerations which respect the soul and its eternal well-being and peace. And most unquestionably, my friends, if you consult the whole history of revealed truth which is bestowed upon you, for your information and guidance; you shall find that the very beginning of salvation being received, has always been, a beginning in the mind of awakened attention to what the word of God declares. And unless your mind be thus turned and awakened to consider your actual condition in reference to God, and to eternity, all outward means and ordinances and services shall be to you but a savour of death unto death. The only remedy offered, is an all-sufficient one,—Christ,—and your coming to Christ, your seeking from Him, that as the everlasting Father, He would

by His Holy Spirit arouse you from the sleep of spiritual death, which by nature lies upon your mind and soul. We know that the very effort, the very endeavour to seek God with earnestness and purpose, is felt by the natural mind as the imposing upon it of a most ungrateful task, which you will feel disposed, if not resolved, to put away from you, for a season at least; and you will, instead of consulting the testimony of God, strive to persuade yourselves that all this is unnecessary: that you may be safe without yet in earnest seeking God; but here is the power of sin operating with you, ruling over you; and the very existence of such a power in your mind, its felt and sensible prevalence,—ought most assuredly to warn you, that your condition is indeed an unsafe and unsound one. Do you, or can you conclude, that in such a state you are among the number of the true people of God? The very beginning of that life to the soul, which Christ bestows as the Eternal Father of the church, is, to bring the soul to the testimony of God, to make it willing to receive the whole of that testimony, and to search it anxiously. Now, all your strength of mind whom we now address, is a strength which turns you away from the testimony of God; and this proclaims to you, that you are not yet united to Christ as your Saviour; that you have not partaken of His life, which He purchased for His people; and therefore you need

above all things, now to receive it. O, can it give you satisfaction or true enjoyment, that you feel yourselves just trying to make your escape continually from the declarations and offers of God in the Gospel? Surely it cannot: and if not now, when you have around you the objects which an earthly mind prizes, and which you so keenly pursue, what must your condition be, when all these things shall prove to be vanity; when you shall feel that they can no longer minister comfort or relief, or gratification, to your immortal spirit, summoned to take its departure, and you know not how soon, into an unseen world, where you must meet for yourselves with that God, whom you have been so industriously striving to shun! Then, surely, your wisdom now is, to acquaint your soul with God, while He offers to you freely and fully all the blessings of Christ's salvation,—and while He offers to be your Father, and to renew your soul, restoring it to spiritual health, and soundness, and beauty.—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a *little*. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

But we would now seek to address those who have testimony in their own mind, that they do truly seek salvation. We fear, however, that some may be very apt to conclude this respecting themselves,—that it is their condition, when it

actually is not. The mere wishing of salvation, is not the seeking of it: and with the subject we speak of, this is most intimately connected. The mere having, or even the cherishing of such wishes is no evidence of that life of which Christ is the eternal Father, being yet in the soul;—we mean wishes, which produce no correspondent exertions,—no bestirring of the inner man, really to seek the blessings of which salvation consists. Mere wishes fix not the mind upon any special and definite object connected with salvation, as a reality. You wish,—but you scarcely can tell us what, with respect to the actual state of your mind: or if there be any thing specific you do wish,—is it not just this,—that you might be allowed to satisfy yourselves with all the pursuits and objects of time, according to your present desires; and that you might then be saved at last, after you had fully satisfied your natural wishes and affections in the things which are seen and temporal? Now, if such be your state, your wishes are vain and delusive. There is no spiritual life in them; they are but a mere shadow, in which there is no spiritual soundness or reality whatever. Do they not permit you to live as you have ever done, careless of God's counsel,—of what He says to you in His word of truth? Do they bring you habitually to consult the word of God for actual instruction and guidance? Alas,

no. They may bring to you now and then perhaps a feeling of regret that you have not given, and that you give not yet, that attention to the things of God and of godliness which you admit that they merit: but what of all that—what do those regrets avail, when the next step of your practical life, in mind and conduct, will be to forget God, and to seek for all your enjoyment and gratification in the objects of time which now surround and attract you? You may think that you wish; you may vainly cherish the hope that such wishes prove you to be sincerely a Christian; but beware, lest all this be practising deceit against yourself, thinking that you are something, when yet truly you are nothing, but a stranger and alien to spiritual life, and therefore unconnected with Christ,—He not being to you your eternal Father, in the true life of the soul. When we thus hear persons professing their wishes, and when we see them enter their names, by public profession, on the side of Christ, we would naturally expect, that here there must be somewhat of spiritual life at least begun. But the tree is known by its fruit. And when you are found from day to day living careless of God, and of the practical duties of godliness, remaining strangers, and that by consent of your mind, notwithstanding all your professed wishes, yea, and your most solemn public professions and vows, remaining strangers to God

in the spirit of your mind, averse and hostile to the practical and every-day business of a vital godliness; what can we conclude regarding you, but that you are still deceiving yourselves, and satisfying yourselves with the mere name or shadow, while all the reality is still awanting.

You may ask perhaps how it is that we judge of the heart; or what right have we to judge it? None whatever, surely, except by the evidence which you yourselves furnish us with, in your daily conversation and walk. But when that is so clear, that he who runneth may read it, we are *not* exceeding the bounds assigned us, when we pronounce upon your condition;—that it is unsafe and unsound: and when we declare to you that you are alienated from the life of God. For instance, when you live practically strangers to the word of God in your personal habits from day to day; strangers at a throne of grace, except perhaps in cold and lifeless formality at stated periods, making show of uttering a few words without heart or meaning, or desire of soul to receive life from Christ; not in your practice alive to the value of salvation, manifesting aversion and dislike to the doctrines of grace and of salvation in your habits of mind; putting these things willingly away from you, giving to God and to godliness just as little as you can of your attention, and time, and talents; then, we cannot but see that you are yet strangers

to all the power of godliness. We know that none more readily than you, will here stand upon the defensive, to try to shelter yourselves from such charges as these." But O what folly it is to be satisfied if you only can thus put away from you the proper view of your own actual condition! It is sinning against your own soul. It is putting the evil day far away when it is truly at hand; and speaking peace to yourselves when there is no peace! From such a state we would earnestly seek to turn you away; and we would solemnly implore and beseech you, to consider to what is it that you devote your strength of mind, your time, your affections, your desires, your efforts. Is it to the objects of eternal salvation? You cannot plead that it is. Therefore we must plead with you, that you are still without spiritual life; for the very nature of that life is, to stir up those who were heedless, and careless, and indifferent before, to the attaining of eternal salvation. You say you wish it; but you prove that your wishes are not real, because they produce no actual fruit in your daily and practical habits. You would wish, no doubt, to escape future and eternal condemnation; but you have never, in point of fact, esteemed salvation so precious as to make it the object of your daily and habitual efforts and care. Of this truly you yourselves may well be sensible. O consider that it is not in this way salvation is offered or

promised to be yours. It is with fear and trembling you are called upon to give heed to it now, lest you come short of attaining it; and were you once truly concerned on the subject, your mind would be occupied with the spiritual prospects of your own personal state; these would be continually before you, and that view would keep you instant with God,—it would solemnize your minds,—it would extend your thoughts habitually beyond the objects of time and of sense, and it would bring you to have intercourse of heart and soul with a world to come,—realizing its objects: it would, in one word, send you habitually to hold intercourse with God.

Such is the very nature of that life which Christ by His Spirit bestows upon those who are effectually called. Such persons cannot but in some measure be known. It is true, indeed, that there may be show and appearance of concern on this subject which may exceed what is actually felt, and that all is unsound at heart. But still, where there is not even the appearance itself, but evidence sufficient to prove that there is a decided aversion to the power and duties of godliness, reigning in the mind,—that case cannot be doubtful. And we would call upon each one of you, with whom the prospects and care of the soul have not yet obtained any practical ascendancy in your habits, to consider the testimony of God which He so abundantly gives you by Christ,

and in all His Gospel's declarations; and to turn now to God, seeking from Him that life of the soul which would make you to live as for eternity and not for time, while yet it is called to-day; lest the things which belong to your peace be for ever hidden from your eyes, the offers of salvation no longer made to you, and its means no longer bestowed upon you. Empty and shadowy wishes are not proofs of spiritual life. But it is abundant evidence of your being still under the power of spiritual death, when you willingly impose upon yourselves, in thinking that all is well with you, because you merely experience such wishes occasionally; or because you fancy that you cherish them habitually, when still there is no other fruit produced to God in your conversation and life.

But to you who cannot rest satisfied with merely saying that you wish salvation to be made yours, the question will be, whether you have yet been truly brought to Christ, whether your soul has been united to Him in that life of which He is the author. You are, perhaps, in doubt and fear respecting your own condition, and anxiously seeking for assurance and comfort upon this all-important subject. You may be very certain of one thing which the testimony of Scripture sets most clearly before you,—that the very nature and exercise of spiritual life, when bestowed upon the soul, are to make you anxious and careful, and

earnest, in seeking salvation from God. The nature of this life is to show to the individual the spiritual death which has hitherto prevailed in his soul, and to direct the mind to the testimony which the Gospel gives concerning Him, who is the life of all His people, Christ Jesus. And if you be truly anxious on this subject, and turned to contemplate your own actual condition with God, you have need to see whether your anxiety of following on to know Him, be greater than that of procuring relief from the fears which you feel pressing upon you and producing discomfort. Have you fixed and established views in your own mind respecting what spiritual life truly is, the heart being renewed to love and serve God, to be fitted for His service and glory, by the absence of sin, and by the presence of such spiritual ability and strength as would enable you continually to obey His commandments? If this latter be your view of the subject, and that you truly seek that power and ability, through Christ, to serve the Lord; then, we can have no hesitation or doubt in declaring, according to the testimony of God Himself, that there is with you the promising appearance of spiritual life,—that He who is the everlasting Father of His church is looking toward you in His loving-kindness and mercy; and you have truly cause of encouragement in following on to know Him. But remember, we entreat you, that while you feel

sin to be yet predominant in your soul, the proof of your being made spiritually alive in Christ Jesus must be, not your immediate deliverance from the annoyance of sin,—not your experiencing at once, so to speak, a full and complete victory over it: but the proof and evidence must be, that you continue striving against it,—that you persevere in seeking deliverance,—that you persist in waiting upon Him who is your life, in the face of your enemies,—and that in the midst of all your cares, and fears, and questionings regarding your present condition, you still be found with your face Zionward, looking to Him who is the everlasting Father, as to the hills whence your strength must come;—that you are obtaining more and more knowledge of your own incapacity to wrestle with sin, and more deep and abiding impressions of your need of Christ, to be unto you as a Father who pitieth His children, and who has continually His eye upon them for good. These are more scriptural proofs of your truly being united to Christ, than your obtaining quiet and ease of mind in any thing,—in any attainment already made, in any duties, in any feelings or affections, separately from Christ. You feel that you are sinful, and that iniquities prevail against you,—that, of itself, is no evidence against your being of the number of those who by Him are quickened, and who pos-

sess of His own life in their souls; if you be found the enemy of sin; and if you be found in time of need looking to Him for strength and deliverance; then, be not discouraged. It is the spirit of children that they cleave to the parent, under an experienced sense and feeling of their own weakness and danger: and so it is in that life which Christ the everlasting Father bestows upon His own children. He teaches them—He enlightens them—He manifests Himself unto them in another way than He does to the world: and it is by their knowing Him, that they receive all their strength; and it is in the habit of resorting to Him, that they receive the gifts of His purchase. But remember, that Christ being the everlasting Father, shows the necessity of your being submissive in mind and spirit to His sovereign and wise appointments. He alone knows what is good and necessary for you. As a Father He cares for all your interests; as a Father He has all the means of your safety and happiness in His own hands. As a Father He alone has the knowledge of *your* character, according to which, He will teach and correct you. You must seek to have your will submissive to His, to be enabled to ask in meekness and in spiritual wisdom, not what would please and gratify you now, but what He knows would conduce to your everlasting well-being,—to the spiritual nourishment and growth

of your soul in conformity to His own image and will. You may be found setting your affections on objects, even on spiritual gifts, which He sees meet to deny you. The greatest of all attainments in the Christian life, while we are on this our wilderness journey, is knowledge of Christ, and submission to His will and His government; and it is through that attainment, bestowed by His gracious Spirit, that every other Christian attainment will follow. And must you not confess, that, when you had received in some measure, at many a season, what you so earnestly set your heart on attaining unto, it did not prove to you what you expected it should: it vanished away and left you perhaps in doubt and in darkness regarding your state altogether—and more careless, perhaps, than before of growing in the knowledge of Christ, and in submission to His gracious and faithful government. All this happened through your forgetting Him as the Father—the Everlasting Father of spiritual life in the soul, and of all its benefits. But He is everlasting in His grace, and love, and truth; and Hé turns you to Himself as your only resource in the time of your need; when you find that without Him, without knowledge of Him ruling in your mind, you can do nothing. Now, the attainment of the true Christian is, as he grows in spiritual life, to live in communion with Christ habit-

ually,—not as mere matter of necessity only, but also of choice,—not as matter merely of interest, but of glorious privilege—to be united to such a Father, and to be possessed, in Him, of such a life as leads to everlasting happiness and glory with Him in the world to come. A denial of your own will would well become you as children—a knowledge that it is not your own will which can lead you to what is profitable, or good, or salutary, but His divine and gracious government. He is the Governor over all His own—He knoweth His own, and *their* highest interest is to know *Him*; and it is then they will truly have the will and the strength exercised, to live, conformably to His will, and to grow up into His divine image and likeness. What is the end and consummation of the life He bestows, but to make you like to Himself? And what ardour of soul ought not this to produce in you, that you should have Him ever before you—Christ dwelling in your heart by faith—you following after Him thus revealed to you—and while you feel unspeakable reason to mourn over your too habitual short-comings, seeking the knowledge of Him to prevail in your mind, which would be the means of making you to abhor sin; and of strengthening you with power and wisdom against its snares and temptations.

SERMON XXV.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

"*The Prince of Peace.*

THE common use amongst us of the term Prince, in some measure misleads the mind as to its true and actual signification. The common idea we attach to it in usage is the son of a king, or a person connected nearly with royalty, but second or inferior in dignity to royalty itself. This is incorrect, and arises from that conventional use of the term amongst us nationally, which the laws of our national polity have suggested. The proper and legitimate meaning of the term is, the chief or principal person. It is, moreover, a relative term. It may perhaps suggest to our minds, and we rather think it is always ready to do so in common use, the idea that there is an authority higher than that of the prince. This is no doubt, politically considered, true, in our own country's his-

tory and usage; but the true and accurate meaning of the term, while a relative one, is, that the authority of the prince is the very highest, that he bears the highest and most legitimate sway over all those whose prince he is. And all conversant with the common reading of civil history cannot fail to remember that the term is indiscriminately applied to any sovereign of a country or kingdom spoken of. We consider this remark of some importance, in addressing you from the words of our present text, because any ordinary habit of mind which might lead you, however silently, or however unconsciously to yourselves, to associate any idea or opinion with your recollections or thoughts of the divine and glorious Saviour, as if He were second or inferior in glory and excellency and perfection to God the Father must be a hurtful and prejudicial habit of mind. The whole of our preceding context, on which we have now dwelt so long in your hearing, goes to confirm and establish the special doctrine, that Christ essentially, as a person of the Godhead, is equal with God the Father, and that in His offices as the Saviour of sinners, all authority and power, in heaven and on earth, are committed to Him personally, for the good and the eternal salvation of all His people; that gracious government is on His shoulder. He is "the Mighty God, the everlasting Father,

the Prince of Peace," which last title, now to form the subject of our present address to you, is altogether equivalent to what it would be, although Prince of Peace were changed into *King* of Peace, or the Sovereign of Peace. And let me seek to impress this, upon the heart and conscience of each one of you present, that all these descriptions of the person and character and offices of Christ are given for the end and object of their bringing you individually into growing acquaintance, spiritually, with Him; that all those who truly desire and seek salvation might have the lives which they live in the flesh, lives of faith on the Son of God, in their practical habits of mind and spirit within them. We must, my friends, renewedly and continually bear you witness, and urge it solemnly upon you, that you cannot prosper but by your having the knowledge of Christ a growing and increasing knowledge, continually in your mind, and that as the principal means of increasing life to the soul. And it will be but nothing and worse than nothing to you, that we speak, or that you hear of Him without this practical faith and knowledge being rooted and grounded in you, and you in them. And if all the testimony which the word of truth bears to you concerning Christ, be not found bringing you into closer habits of intercourse with Him, as your Saviour and your Lord;—if all this be not found inclining and

leading you, more and more to live *to* Christ; O see that it be not, because with you faith is awanting,—that the word is not mingled with faith in you who hear it. Seek that faith from Himself by the ministration of His Spirit conveying the testimony of the word to your heart in demonstration and power, that Christ may be honoured and glorified in you; and you in Him growing, in preparation of soul and spirit to be glorified with Him in due time, when He shall again, and you know not how speedily, come, to summon your soul into His presence.

In farther addressing you now, from the words of our present text, there are two special things which demand our attention—the title here given to Christ; and the peace of which He is the Prince or Sovereign.

On the first of these two, we do not propose to dwell long. As already stated, it signifies, that Christ, in His offices of mediator between God and men, has sovereign and full authority. But there is one aspect of the doctrine implied in the title of Prince, to which we must endeavour to direct your careful attention. It suggests the true, important, and practical view,—that all the benefits of salvation have been purchased and obtained to His people by Christ alone. You will remember, here, a particular emphasis given to this designation of Prince, and unquestionably by

Christ Himself, when He addressed the patriarch Jacob, saying, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a *Prince* hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The title suggests therefore, the abundant and prevailing power which Christ had essentially as God, when He appeared in our form and likeness, and by all His doings and sufferings obtained the victory for His people, over sin in its condemning power, enduring all that it merited as punishment from the justice of God, and securing to sinners from God, the benefits promised in the covenant of grace. These He purchased by His own prevailing strength, as He likewise did the overthrow of Satan's dominion in the hearts of those whom He purposed to save. He took out of the way that which stood between their souls and the favour of God, which could never have been removed but by His intervention as the Prince of Peace, to prevail in this fearful conflict by His own Almighty power. And we would here also beseech your attention to what was declared to Jacob, in the passage cited already,—that as a prince he had power with men. In that declaration, allusion is made to the circumstances in which Jacob then was placed. Men were combined against him at that time. His brother Esau, actuated by the worst and most malignant passions of the human breast, came with armed

forces against him, bent upon Jacob's destruction. And how did Jacob prevail with men as a prince? not by opposing passion to passion, and strife to strife: but by acting in liberality and kindness, truly as a prince, disarming his brother's mind of those evil and turbulent passions by manifesting toward him bounty, and kindness, and love: convincing Esau, that instead of Jacob cherishing toward him the evil designs which Esau suspected, he cherished towards him nought but kindness and affection, and all the regard for his interest and welfare and happiness which Esau himself could desire, and unspeakably more, than he might reasonably expect, considering his conduct to Jacob. And the use we would make of this important analogy is, to remind you, that when in the ignorance of God, which sin hath brought upon our race, the human heart is filled with wrong suspicions of God, with fear and terror, and enmity, Christ, the Prince who here is spoken of, came, and made known to sinners, as He now seeks to do to you individually, the kindness, and bounty, and love, which are with Him and His Father toward you as individual sinners. We, as Esau toward Jacob, do naturally cherish toward God, yea, and toward Christ personally, evil suspicions and fears, and enmity; and the evil passions of the natural mind,—the evil affections which naturally rule in us,—reject Him, and despise His

salvation. The natural heart is jealous of Christ and of God, fearing that they demand too much from us, of homage, and obedience, and devotedness: the natural heart shrinks from giving these in the manner or measure required;—it fears that this Prince will disturb us and rob us of our possessions, and idols, and joys;—it arms itself therefore against the reception of Christ and of His glorious gospel,—it calls to its aid every auxiliary that it can of its own ingenuity and skill, and adroitness,—to ward off the calls of Christ in the Gospel, from the conscience and heart. And, alas, how many exhibitions of this kind may we see, painful, and fearful, around us; the sinner *dreading* to be interfered with, or robbed of his joys and pleasures, if he should receive Christ to rule in the soul. But this glorious Prince of Peace, demonstrates to the soul, and now offers to do so, to every unbelieving soul now in our hearing, that He wishes your good,—that He has everlasting benefits to bestow, and of eternally, and unspeakably greater value, than those you possess;—that He purchased them, by a servitude and suffering, unspeakably more grievous than that of Jacob in a land of strangers;—that as He purchased them, and has them now in possession, His true desire is, that He might to you freely impart them, and that He might bless your soul in their everlasting possession;—that His great desire is, that you

should be *blest*, and not destroyed or injured, by His coming to you. And it is when the mind is enlightened to see the grace of God, in Jesus Christ,—to understand the value of those things which Christ has purchased, and which He now seeks to bestow; it is then, that the mind becomes indeed a new mind, with reference to God and to Christ; as the mind of Esau became towards Jacob, when he saw demonstrated before him in such princely bounties, the mind of Jacob towards him. Had Esau not seen those bounties and gifts, he would never have credited that Jacob was friendly or brotherly towards himself; but the sight overcame him, and he was then reconciled. And while Christ as the Prince of Peace, has purchased eternal and glorious bounties to sinners as you are, and now offers them freely to you; we would address every natural and unconverted mind in our hearing, testifying unto you, my friends, that the sorest trespass you commit against your own everlasting well-being, is the not considering of those things in their greatness, and value, and glory, which Christ is now offering to your souls as their portion and blessings; it is your guilt and your misery both, that you do not seek to behold them,—that you wish not to think of them;—that you will not lay them to heart,—that you are refusing to do so;—that by not solemnly reflecting upon them, you do refuse

them in your habits of mind,—that when they are urged upon you, you turn your mind away from them: and this, you must be conscious to yourselves, is your habit of mind. And while it is, O how unworthy your conduct towards the Prince of Peace! worse infinitely, than that of Esau to Jacob; and involving, to you, consequences infinitely more momentous and awful: they are urged upon your acceptance—all these precious and eternal benefits. And to every individual in our hearing who has not yet made choice of Christ and of His salvation, but does positively neglect them,—to every individual of you who does not yet feel that the favour of God is the life and well-being of your soul, and who does not pursue it as very life to you—what has been the effect to you of all the offers of Christ which you have ever till this day received? Just your still thinking evil of God and of this glorious Prince of Peace. This charge you will not perhaps willingly admit. But consider, that while you are refusing to make the one thing needful of the salvation of Christ—while you refuse to give to it your heart and mind above all other objects of thought, and of care, and pursuit,—while you are positively refusing to do so, and that, in your own consciousness,—you are disliking and rejecting the Prince of Peace in His gracious offers. Now, why is it so with you, that you still refuse? It is just be-

cause you judge that the offers and the authority of Christ in the Gospel would interfere with your comforts and good. You will not part with *them*,—you will not give them up as your portion, your treasure, as you vainly suppose them to be, for the bounties and gifts which Christ the Prince of Peace is offering: and do you not then *dislike* the offers, and the name and authority of the glorious Prince who makes them? Assuredly you do. And we would solemnly intreat you to consider the matter, and to seek from God,—O cannot you seek this one thing from Him, that He would bestow upon you the mind, the desire, the ability to ponder more the things which belong to your peace? He will bestow these upon you. Do you truly seek to have such a mind given you? If you do not, then how can you defend yourselves from the charge that you do really dislike the whole matter? You cannot, in the presence of an all-seeing God. And consider, we intreat you, that such a state of mind on your part is a positive enmity, and that your being restored from it is your very peace and salvation. The Prince of Peace waits to be gracious to you. Come then unto Him while yet He waits, and calls upon you, that you may be instructed by His Spirit, and become sharers in His everlasting benefits and glory.

But to those who have been brought to seek

salvation as the one thing needful, we would just offer on this head one word for counsel and guidance, in their daily and usual habits. While Christ is held forth to you in the word as the Prince of Peace, and while that title signifies, as we have been endeavouring to show, His having purchased every benefit of which you stand in need, and His having them now in His own personal possession to bestow, it is your safety and well-being continually to feel and remember that He is the purchaser of them, whatever be the special benefits, or grace, or aid which you seek, feeling your present want. And is it not known to you, in your practical habit during the time that is past, ever since you have been awakened into earnestness respecting your salvation, that in your asking, and praying, and waiting on God, you have been continually prone to attach much more importance to your own asking and seeking, as a means to you of receiving, than you have been attaching to the purchasing work of Christ? In your supplications and prayers, has your mind been directed to Him as the Prince who conquered for you, and who now rules for you? Alas! it has not habitually, and therefore it is that you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss. And even when you thought that you had in your mind for the time, clear views of the work of Christ being the only

purchasing way for the benefits which you sought to be given you, how true, but how sad and mournful it is, that your mind does again lose sight of *Him* as the Prince of Peace, conquering for you, and purchasing the benefits; and while you longed to receive them, whatever they were, your mind again settled down into the contemplation more of *your* having asked, and your having performed duties, than to *His* having *purchased;* and perhaps every longing or wish you experienced for the benefit needed, and every hope of your yet receiving it, stood habitually with you, much more connected with your own deeds than with the deeds and sufferings of Christ. Upon the former you leaned as a ground of your hope with God, and not on the latter. Now, in such a state, you have been found turning away from Christ as *your* Prince, and trusting to yourselves. It is true He commands the means and the duties which you have observed—it is true that He promises benefits to those who seek, and your business and commanded course most truly are to *seek.* But all this seeking is not the purchasing;—that all has been already done by Christ: in His own hands the benefits are, to bestow them, as the Prince who obtained them. He must become, therefore, *to you, your* Prince, in your continual habits,—you must seek this believing view of Him to rule in your mind. Your petitions, your

prayers, your every duty must be at the foot of His cross,—beholding Him, as the conqueror for you there, the mighty and glorious Prince who achieved for you all things—the Prince or Sovereign who now has them as *purchased* benefits to bestow. Seek, therefore, from Himself, and through His gracious Spirit, that this believing view might be given you, and continually upheld in your mind. While you come practically short of it, you come short of true peace. As Christ is the Prince of Peace to His people, He must be so in this view, in His purchasing work, in His conquering and prevailing power, before they become sharers in that peace which is His, and which He seeks that all His own should enjoy. Now, this is a view which continually humbles the mind with respect to itself,—it makes the spirit contrite—feeling that you have not merited bounties of peace, but inflictions of wrath, that your personal sinfulness renders you wholly unworthy; this is the truth—the true view for the believing soul to have; and it is the view in which peace, and consolation, and joy will begin, notwithstanding the believer's knowledge of himself, to come in, and to abound,—beholding that in Christ all the purchasing work is finished already,—that in Christ the power to bestow, and the love to bestow, reign with eternal and unchangeable fulness; and it is therefore declared by Christ, that

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." If the mind be effectually awakened at all, to consider the things which belong to its peace, it is as impossible for it to have true establishment, or comfort, or hope, without this believing view of Christ, as it is to enjoy light, and warmth, and comfort on earth, without the natural sun rising and shining upon it.

But this leads us to speak, secondly, as proposed, of that peace which is referred to in the words of our text, as the purchase and property of Christ the Prince of Peace to bestow.

We would ever seek to impress it upon you, as the leading characteristic of this peace, that it is a peace with God, and *that*, as opposed to the temper of mind which is naturally cherished towards God, by every son and daughter of Adam in their unconverted state: that temper of mind is a practical opposition to the will and government of God, in what He requires of us, and in what He would have us to be, and what He offers to us as our everlasting portion. And this peace is a reconciliation of the mind and soul, in its principles and powers, and in its desires and habits, to the will and government of God over us individually, to what He would have us to be, and to what He offers to us as our everlasting inheritance. It is any thing but a peace and contentment with ourselves in our natural estate and

condition,—any thing but a peace with sin, and contentment in sin ruling over us, or a peace or enjoyment in its practice and ways. A peace with God implies as its very primary element, a knowledge of God, a received and cherished view in the mind, of His glorious perfections and divine character, and of that sovereignty over His creatures which is *His* by eternal right; and a reconciliation in the mind of each one who enjoys the peace spoken of in our text, to God in His exercise of that sovereignty with respect to the individuals themselves, who know Him, and who are made by grace obedient to Him. Now, it is through Christ, that this knowledge of God has been given, which being received by the mind, reconciles sinners to Him. We would seek to appeal to your own consciousness regarding a certain feeling which is inherent in the mind of man by nature, a feeling or distant sort of conviction, that there may be, or that there *is* a God; and when this is the only knowledge of God exercised in the mind, it is accompanied by a dread of God, a retreating from Him, a shrinking from the very sense of His authority over you, and a dislike to the demands which are made by Him upon your obedience and love. Now, very much of this temper of mind is most obviously the fruit of spiritual ignorance concerning God. Christ has revealed the Father,—He has shown

to us what God is,—that He is merciful and gracious, and that He bears toward sinners an everlasting love,—that He has provided and offers freely to you, everlasting happiness for your soul: —of this He has given the most clear and affecting proofs through Jesus Christ: in Him, the Prince of Peace, He has made clear the way for your being reconciled to God. Not only has Christ made known the character of God, but He has in Himself made provision for this temper of mind which naturally reigns in you, being removed,—being subdued and done away with in your heart and spirit within you. He invites you to contemplate His mercy, and grace, and love, as exhibited to you in His own finished work; that you might be thus reconciled to God. God gives you the assurance in His word, that coming to Christ, your sins will be pardoned, counted no longer against you; and that your soul and person will be accepted guiltless before Him, for the sake of what Christ has suffered and done; and that you shall be treated and dealt with as children, enjoying the blessing and favour of God. All these blessings and privileges Christ has procured, who is Himself God and the Saviour, and who has the divine authority, and power, and will, to make you possessors of a mind and heart reconciled to God, and at peace with Him. But you cannot be possessors of this peace, without your being brought

to Christ,—without your coming to Him,—without your seeking and obtaining knowledge of Him, as He is set forth in the Gospel, full of grace and truth, and now exalted in heaven, to bestow upon you this peace with God, as His own purchased gift. And from what has been already advanced on the former head of discourse, is it not manifest to yourselves individually, that you stand in need of such a peace with God, such a reconciliation with Him, as would incline you effectually to seek to God, and not to retreat from Him, which would dispose and attract you to cultivate intercourse and communion with God, and to be obedient to His divine authority and will? That you have not such dispositions naturally, we consider to be a matter made out in all plainness to your own consciousness within you; and yet without your being actually brought to *have* such dispositions and desires, you have no peace with God, and though you may be found naming the name of Christ, and professing Him outwardly in solemn services, and in personal, formal duties, yet He is not to you, "the Prince of Peace." Such a peace with God, such a reconciliation to His government, and character, and will, as would have the habitual effect of preserving in your mind, a supreme desire to serve Him, a desire to honour and glorify Him, as the great end of your being, is of unspeakably great and glorious

value. It establishes the mind in peace and security on the most assured and unchangeable foundations. It enables the soul to contemplate God as its friend; it strengthens the soul to be habitually found waiting upon God Himself as manifested in Christ, for every needed blessing and privilege, with respect to time and eternity. It gives indeed no security, that the individuals shall possess those gratifications to their natural and earthly desires in the present life which they are *by nature* prone to seek after as their principal good; but it gives to them the immeasurably better and nobler assurance, that they have offered freely unto them of God in Jesus Christ, a glorious, and eternal, and unfading inheritance; an assurance that their true happiness depends not on the transitory scenes and objects of the present world, but that when all those things shall have passed away after which they seek, who know not God; there will be awaiting for them who do *know* Him, and who are reconciled to Him, what ear hath not heard, what eye hath not seen, and what it hath not entered into the mind of man to think, of glory and eternal happiness. Surely it is well worthy of being called a peace, which establishes the mind on such sure and unchangeable prospects of safety and happiness. This conquers the world in all its sorrows and pains, in all its grievances and trying vexations; and it gives the

cheering and animating hope to the mind,—a hope based and confirmed on the word and promise of the eternal God of truth,—that whatever be the evils which afflict the individual in his person or lot, in the life that now is, they are sent in mercy, and wisdom, and kindness, and will all be the means of contributing to his everlasting good. But let us remember, that of these blessings, none can be truly enjoyed without a believing view of God, as a God in Christ,—without this being upheld in the mind from day to day, without this view being continually cherished and exercised. And if you feel the difficulty of this being realized by you, it is indeed your weakness and your spiritual disease; but for this there is ample remedy and provision made, in that covenant of which the Prince of Peace is the living and glorious Head: the Spirit of truth is willing to come, and to dwell with you, that you may have His enlightening and convincing power, and this view of God as a God in Christ, merciful, gracious, and faithful, upheld in your mind, and that you may enjoy the blessedness of those whose minds are staid on the Lord, and to whom it is promised, that He shall keep their minds in perfect peace. To the believer, then, there is manifested through the Gospel, the desire and will of God to bestow upon the individual soul eternal happiness and glory; that this has been purchased for you by Christ; that

this, Christ now has to bestow; that all the calls of God upon the believer are for his own good. This, the unbelieving mind does not allow, it does not understand, and being mad on its idols, it does not seek to understand. But in truly beholding the will of God towards us to be gracious, there is a primary element of everlasting peace with God, conveyed to the soul, and established there; and it shall for ever remain, for like every other principle and element of spiritual life, this view of the character of God, when received, is eternal and immortal, for it it is truth itself,—the true manifestation of the character of God.

But again, this peace, of which Christ is the Prince, implies a believing view in the mind, of the beauty, and excellency, and glory of the character of God in His essential attributes; His infinity of being, His eternity and self-existence, His everlasting sovereignty and dominion, His unchangeableness and perfection of being, His wisdom, His power, His holiness, His justice, His goodness, and His truth. When these are beheld, by a spiritual enlightening of the mind, not only does the believer become reconciled to them, but he feels it to be his duty and privilege to become in mind submissive to God, and he begins to love God for what He is in Himself, as well as for what He is willing to be, to unworthy and guilty sinners. By Christ all those attributes of God have been clearly

revealed, and proven to exist with Him, in such a way, that they do all remain magnified and made honourable in the forgiveness of sin to the guilty, in the purifying and sanctifying of the polluted soul and mind of the sinner, and in his receiving from God as the purchased gift of Christ, glory, and honour, and immortality. Such a believing view as this of God,—He being thus manifested to the soul by Jesus Christ, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, attracts the soul to God, with ardour of spiritual attachment and godly desire of heart. The sinner is now ashamed of his sin, as committed against so glorious and so gracious a being, and repents of sin, with unfeigned and sincere repentance. He abhors sin, and seeks to flee from it, anxious to strive against its ruling power in the mind. Formerly he was at peace with sin, and at variance and enmity with God; now, he is at peace with God, reconciled to *Him*, and at variance and enmity with sin. This is an essential change upon the spiritual constitution and character of the human mind. But my friends, while this is peace with God, the peace of which our text speaks,—that you can personally be the friends or the disciples of Christ without knowing it,—and He to *you* the Prince of Peace, without your knowing and experiencing this peace in your own mind, is an absolute contradiction. Do not deceive yourselves with imagining that you

are the subjects of this Prince of Peace, then, when you neither possess nor truly seek or desire the peace which He purchased, and which He is offering to bestow. Let each one of you see to your own state of soul. You *must* be, either the friends or the enemies of God and of Christ. Strangers to this peace with God, you are His enemies; but He is a gracious God, and He still invites and beseeches you to be reconciled to Him, —to seek and to receive from Him, by Jesus Christ, that knowledge of His will, and His character, which would bring your souls into friendship and union with Him.

SERMON XXVI.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

The Prince of Peace.

IN already addressing you from these words, we endeavoured to state, the nature and fitness of the title which is here given to Christ, in His being called a Prince; and also, one or two particulars respecting that peace, of which He is here said to be the Prince. It is a peace embracing great and eternal interests, and giving its character to the most important of all relations in which we, as created beings, do stand, our relation to God. If indeed we be now of His people, we do know this peace: and we are still His enemies if we reject that peace which He offers us.

We shall, at this time proceed, in dependance on divine aid, to set before you farther, some special features of this peace, which are essential to it, and of which those who believe on Christ

are made partakers. We have already observed, that the peace here spoken of, is specially a peace with God, and that this implied reconciliation of mind, in His people individually, to the supremacy and government, to the character and will of God; and to the gracious offers which through Christ He makes to us in the Gospel. To all these, we endeavoured to show and to prove, that the mind of man is by nature opposed: and we therefore sought to bring under your view, that this peace with God implied necessarily an enlightening of the mind in the knowledge of God, and of His gracious and merciful will toward us made manifest in Jesus Christ: and in the next place, that the same enlightening of mind with which the people of God are favoured, goes to show them, and to impress upon their minds continually, a view of the character and attributes of God, in such measure as makes them not only to be reconciled to God in the spirit of their minds, but gives them also, in their souls, the principle of love to God, when they see His character and attributes manifested in the face of Jesus Christ,—that is, God's attributes and character made known, by the personal character, the doings and sufferings, the doctrines, the promises, and the precepts of Christ. Now, until such an enlightening come to the mind, there is not, there cannot be, true peace with God. There may be an external

worshipping of God, there may be a profession of reverence toward Him, and of respect to His service and cause; but there can be no true reconciliation to Him in the heart and mind. And we should surely suppose it not impossible for any individual to know, whether such an enlightening of mind had been received by himself. And if this be deemed too hard a test, surely there is no rational being who ponders the matter at all, who may not know, whether he be seeking it or not, whether he truly desires to receive it. Those who do not, can be very easily known to themselves as such, and even to others, by their not seeking to God,—by your avoiding the claims and the calls of God upon you:—seeking to put away the thoughts of God and the consideration of eternal things from your mind: at all events, not seeking, or wishing, or striving to retain them with you. To all who are of that character and habit, Christ is not the Prince of Peace: you are not His subjects,—you enjoy not the peace which He purchased, and which He is still offering you; and you manifestly seek not to receive it. We warn you of your imminent danger in this state. You are the enemies of God, and of your own souls; and we now repeat to you, what we formerly stated, that the only way of your deliverance from this state, is, your *now* seeking to God, while He yet waits to be gracious: while

He offers to instruct and enlighten your mind by the Spirit of truth,—while that gracious Spirit is willing to come and to dwell with you;—that you seek from God through Christ Jesus, His enlightening and powerful guidance, to bestow upon you that mind, without your receiving of which, you must always continue the enemies of God, and in the road which leads to eternal destruction. Your time and opportunities of grace are fast and speedily passing away; and we call upon you *now* to seek to God, that your soul may be saved by the glorious Prince of Peace.

But we proceed to state that this peace consists also, in peace of conscience. The conscience of the natural man, accuses him of sin,—it speaks to him with a condemning voice: it forewarns him, sometimes at least, of a judgment to come, and he trembles like Felix; while yet he puts away from him, as that unhappy man did to Paul, the warnings which thus are given; and he returns again to his sins. It is true that such persons do make a kind of peace with their conscience: and on this part of our subject, we shall endeavour to set before you, the essential difference there is between a false peace of conscience, and that which Christ gives as the Prince of Peace to His people. A false peace of conscience is generally obtained in either of two ways. When natural conscience speaks, and denounces the sins of which you are guilty, some

in our hearing, perhaps, make it their chief business to silence this monitor within: if you can only rid yourselves of the trouble it gives you, this is all you desire; and in this business you succeed with a fearful dĕgree of facility—but how?—by sinning the more.—If you are warned of one sin by conscience, it is but too true that your mode of silencing it, and obtaining peace, is by committing others,—and other sins perhaps of a still more aggravated kind. Indeed, *any* sin committed, is a specially aggravated sin to you, when you do commit it, with the view of silencing the accusations of conscience. But consider this, that whatever you resort to, to procure relief to your mind from such accusations; whatever pursuit you fly to, whether of business, or pleasure, of frivolous amusement or gratification, or sensual enjoyment, call it by whatever popular or harmless name you may, and let it pass current with men as it may, as a harmless or as a laudable pursuit,—if your object in seeking it be to rid yourself of the accusations of conscience, and to drive away serious thoughts from your mind; such things, gild them as you may with a soothing and pleasing name to yourselves or to others, —they are sin to *you*: they are committed against God, and against Him in His condescension and kindness, when He seeks by the voice of your conscience to instruct and to warn

you. You are fleeing from God,—and prosper you cannot at the end of such a course. You may attain the peace you seek,—you may betake yourself to your pursuit, and the voice of conscience is drowned or silenced perhaps in the turbulence of your worst or your basest passion, to which you give a loose rein, and willingly, when the sting of conscience goads you on; and instead of your seeking to Christ for peace, you enter into willing league with the enemies of Christ and your soul. Alas, your peace is dearly purchased indeed!—by a heaping up of materials, yet to be to your soul as fuel, which the wrath of God shall one day set on fire to torment you in flames that can never be quenched; if in this course you persist. You think you escape from this condemnation, when you succeed in drowning the voice of its fearful forebodings. Indeed you know, sometimes, that your conduct is wretched and foolish, that somewhat like insanity itself is legibly written upon it, legibly to your own understanding: but the fearful malignity of sin in your deplorable character of mind, is indeed manifestly displayed! Every renewed act of such a fleeing from God, of such a sinning against Him, hardens your heart more and more against any purpose or effort of returning to Him. It makes you more fearfully averse to have any thing to say or to do with God: and is not that a dreadful condition!

These reiterated acts of sinning kindle within you a hatred to whatever is spiritual, or holy, or pure: and the very form itself of Christian duty —the bending of the knee to God—is studiously avoided; the solemn calling on God in prayer, is fled from if possible; the holy word of God is eschewed, even as if it were fire that would burn you, or poison that would destroy you; any communings with your own heart about God or godliness, or with others, you cannot bear; you are filled, or soon you will be, with hatred and dislike to the very name or semblance of godliness; and under all these fearful signs of a coming wrath, which will consume the adversaries, you are still perhaps contented, just in so far as you have succeeded in putting conscience to silence! O be warned, and remember, that every silencing thus of conscience, will only make it recruit in new and awful strength, to come upon you at last with the power of ten thousand voices of thunder, to overwhelm your soul with despair, under the condemning look of the righteous Judge of the earth, the Prince of Peace, whom now you despise and reject. O, listen yet, therefore, to the admonitions and warnings of conscience, and seek unto God, that you may learn where you may find a better and a surer peace—a peace with God, through Jesus Christ, which will fill your soul with true quietness and joy,

and which will bestow upon you everlasting freedom from the power and the hardening influence of sin.

But there is another peace which is obtained to the natural conscience, and not yet the peace of which Christ is the Prince. You who purchase this peace, by paying a price, are not perhaps so hardened in sin, as those others whom we have already addressed. Your course is different from theirs, and bears not upon it so marked a contrariety to all godliness. The truth is, that conscience with you, gives you little trouble, except when you feel cause to dread some consequence of your sin, which would prove to you a temporal evil: you then listen to the accusations of conscience, and you fear that truly they speak the truth. And your course is this—you have recourse to certain duties, to prayers, to promises, to resolutions, perhaps to vows of amendment, and of departure from that specific sin of which conscience now accuses you. You practise these duties for a season; and for how long? Just till the tormentor within ceases to assault or terrify your soul; and whenever you have succeeded in ridding yourselves of that disturbance, you then forget as speedily as may be, all your purposes, your resolutions, your vows of amendment; your prayers cease; you seek no longer intercourse with God; you can

now do without Him again; you do not indeed *forget* your prayers, in the literal sense of the word,—for you set much value upon them in your own esteem,—you think they were exceedingly good, and fervent, and acceptable to God, and that they have done no less than to procure you His favour. Conscience, meantime, is silenced, and the worst feature in your case, is, what you yourselves esteem the best of it;—you think you are Christians in truth, very serious, very promising, and in short, very superior to many others around you. And, after all, when this species of peace is restored to you, sin is restored in all its power, and on you go to it, with as keen relish, and as free a course as before; and you live as careless of God as before, as indifferent to His will as before, and as destitute as before of any true reverence, or fear, or love of His name, or His character, or His glory. And is this the character of a Christian? Is this the deportment of a subject of Christ, as the Prince of Peace? No; it is as different from the Christian character, as light is from darkness; and we would beseech you, whose temporary and false peace of conscience is thus miserably patched up from time to time, to consider, that truly this is not the peace of God which passeth knowledge, and that you truly have need to seek for another and a better peace, on a more excellent, and a

more lasting foundation. And to both classes of persons whom we have now been addressing, we would offer the following counsel: Your conscience needs to be enlightened as much as awakened. It has never yet been truly awakened at all. It has only testified to you yet of special and actual sins. With the measure of awakening it has had, if you had truly sought to God, it might and would have come to somewhat more: but as it is, since you have trusted in all that you yourselves have done, not receiving the counsel of God in His word, not giving heed to its declarations respecting sin, and to what it sets before you as your own state and character personally; you have been in all your history, only departing from God, in point of fact; and you may well know it; because we cannot but think that you feel your peace to be very insecure. You live in a state of constant alarm; you are continually afraid of the like terror coming renewedly upon you, and you do experience from time to time, as if indeed you were building your house on the sand; and so you are,—you who compose the latter, as well as the former class we have now been addressing. Consider these two things. An awakened conscience sends the sinner to seek peace with God, not peace with himself merely. An awakened conscience, when effectually awakened, sees the guilt of sin to consist not merely in

specific acts, but in the being and power of sin in the mind and soul. These two feelings you have not yet experienced; and therefore you have need still to have your conscience truly awakened, and to seek from God that He would truly enlighten your mind. When conscience is both enlightened and quickened by the Spirit of God, with efficacy, and with power, it looks to the qualities of sin, so to speak; to the nature of sin, as opposed to the will, and the government, and the character of God. Now, in all that has happened to you whom we now address, you have had, in point of fact, little or no considerations of God; if any, they were but indistinct, and of a terrifying nature, and even those but short-lived and imperfect. It was your own discomfort, or your own fear of temporal evil, that remained all the while prevalent in your mind. Any steady and well-directed look towards God and eternity, even that, you have not attained to; and yet these being attained to, and becoming influential in the mind, are essential principles in the very first movements of a truly awakened conscience, and they abide permanently as an exercise of the mind. And without this awakening of conscience, without such a rousing of it, or rather indeed, such a renewing of it, peace cannot be truly attained to with God, through Jesus Christ. The conscience that is truly awakened, will cause

the sinner to feel himself shut out from all access to God, in consequence of sin; he will behold this as the very consequence of sin; and that it renders him guilty in the sight of God, being committed against Him, and that it is continually rendering the mind hostile to God, and disobedient, and rebellious. Now, this is what appals the awakened soul; this is what humbles it in the dust, in the presence of God—to feel, as conscience testifies to be the case, that this sin pervades the mind, that it is continually making head against the authority and the will of God, and is therefore, according to the justice, and truth, and holiness of God, bringing the soul continually under the sentence of His righteous condemnation. Peace, with God, in such a view of one's own character and state is not so easily attained, as you whom we have now been addressing, supposed; and peace with himself, in such a condition, the awakened sinner cannot experience: and however painful and fearful it may be to him, the reality of his condition which now he beholds, he would not purchase peace by forgetting his guilt, and by turning away from considering it. This he would dread to do, because he now feels that he has to do with a just and omniscient, and righteous God. And when he seeks to God by supplication and prayer, he still feels, that with these duties of his, sin is constantly mingled, and that there-

fore they cannot purchase to him, peace with God, or the favour of God. Let him pray as he may, and read the word of God as he may; let him promise, and resolve, and vow as he may, to forsake sin; yet he feels that all this will not avail him, that sin is still ruling within him, and therefore that all those doings and purposes of his, will not diminish his guilt, or commend him to God. He feels himself sinful as ever, and guilty as ever, and without another's help than his own, his state would amount to positive and absolute despair: without sin being pardoned he cannot attain to peace; and pardon he cannot purchase,—of this, the continued consciousness of sin gives him the humbling and fearful testimony. It is true, that all the while he may be using the name of Christ, and *hearing* much of that glorious name, and reading much of it in the word of God. But all this will not suffice to give peace to the conscience: still he is a sinner with whom sin is continually abounding. This peace of conscience, then, cannot be attained to without that new principle being wrought in the mind, which enables it to apprehend and receive the Lord Jesus, as its hope and its peace: seeing that Christ died once for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring sinners to God: it is this being borne in on the mind with demonstration and power, on the understanding and spiritual

vision of the soul, to look to and consider it carefully,—to see that here, in God Himself, all the remedy is provided; that He who is the sacrifice for sin is Himself God over all and blessed for ever; —that He came as the mighty conqueror, to take out of the way that which the soul feels to intervene between itself and the favour of God—that is, the guilt of sin,—that He took this upon Himself, enduring it all, and sustaining it; and that He is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour to bestow repentance and remission of sin;—it is this view entering into the mind, and obtaining, if we may so speak, a fixed locality and abode in the understanding and heart,—which will give peace to the awakened conscience. Hearing of all this is not sufficient to the truly awakened soul; but the understanding of it by a clear and effectual demonstration. The value of that atonement which Christ made, its eternal and unspeakable value, made manifest to the soul when its attention is truly turned to consider who He is,—this gives to the conscience an essential element of its peace. The more that He is considered as the great High Priest of His people's profession, the more His preciousness and excellency will be seen and admired by the soul: and the love of Christ in undertaking the work, the grace of God in ordaining the way, in making all the provision which the Gospel reveals,—this turns the mind to have the

ground of its comfort and hope in Christ, as its Prince of Peace, and to rest upon Him, for its own deliverance and safety. In all this, the feeling of sin is not diminished on the part of the mind and conscience so awakened. The individual seeks not to flee from the presence of God; but he has now confidence and encouragement of soul bestowed; that the guilt of his iniquity will be pardoned; and he comes to God desiring and longing for that pardon being sealed to him, in his receiving from Christ, a heart and mind to hate sin, to overcome its ruling power, and to receive those new principles and affections of heart which would enable him truly to serve the Lord. His conscience cannot have peace, but in looking to the cross of Christ; and there he beholds that the guilt of his iniquity was borne by the Lamb of God,—that the Prince of Peace, hath there obtained the victory for him, in sustaining the anger and wrath of God against sin: and the enlightening of mind which has turned the soul to consider the value and excellency and wonders of the sacrifice which was given, will also carry the soul to that view or knowledge of Christ which contemplates Him in His exalted condition now, as a Prince and a Saviour. And there does accompany all this, in the believing mind, such a measure of assurance regarding the willingness of Christ to bestow upon the individual the full benefit of par-

don, that the conscience enjoys a peace which is experienced to be unspeakable in its value, and unchangeable in its very nature, if only the soul could attain to the actual receiving of Christ, in whom the soul now beholds that all its salvation rests. And even in seeking to be thus united to Christ, in desiring thus to receive Him, and to be freed from sin, by His abounding grace, and from the power and rule of sin, by the exercise of that sovereign power in Christ which reproves the enemies of the soul, and works deliverance from them, this gives a measure of peace, which no one else can enjoy, who has not experienced the awakening, and the fear, and the anxiety concerning sin, of which now we have spoken. And while the soul feels its own entire inability even to believe or to rest upon Christ as the Prince of Peace to it individually, it seeks with earnestness and sincere desire, that the Holy Spirit of truth should come and abide with it, to lead it, and to guide it into the knowledge and faith of Christ more and more abundantly. But this conscience, which has its peace in Christ, beholding Him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and which cannot rest satisfied with any other source of hope or of peace, than Him crucified, is still a conscience fearful of sin, and faithful and watchful in testifying against it. It is now the friend of God, so to speak, in the soul,—it testifies to the soul

concerning the character of God, and of His saving grace in Jesus Christ; and while it is thus kept wakeful with respect to sin, it leads the individual studiously and carefully to avoid its practice. The conscience obtaining peace in Christ, urges the soul to consider *Him*, in His glory and excellency as God, hating sin with a perfect hatred; and this brings the soul to be watchful against sin, and to strive against its deceitfulness and its power. It may, and assuredly it does, give much concern to the believer continually,—the feeling that he does commit sin, notwithstanding all that he has experienced and known of its guilt and its misery; but he comes to the Prince of Peace, seeking from *Him* that exercise of His power which would subdue the whole mind to the obedience of His perfect and holy will. The terrors of the Lord, in denouncing punishment against sin, are still heard by the soul thus awakened, and heard with attention, with reverence and with godly fear; but the knowledge of Christ as the Prince of Peace, brings peace to the conscience. His name is to the soul as a strong tower,—and thither the righteous fleeth and is safe.

Would you then enjoy peace of conscience;—seek that it be first enlightened and awakened, to see the guilt and the misery of sin, and to testify of these to you, with a voice and power which you could not gainsay or silence, and

which would cause you to feel, that nothing but the atonement made upon the cross by the Son of God can avail you, and nothing but a personal interest in its merits and efficacy. Seek from God, that He would send His blessed Spirit thus to convince you of sin, for without that, you will continually remain at peace with sin in your soul, and under its power in all your practice and habits,—whatever other warnings you may have, and whatever terrors may come to you, they will be of no avail, till they are such as will bring you to Christ, as your only resource,—your only remedy and deliverance. This peace of conscience which Christ purchased, to the enjoyment of which His Spirit leads the soul, in believing on Christ, will be maintained, by the exercise of a growing and an influential faith in His name, and in His government. The mind will still feel undoubtedly its own insufficiency to abstain from sin, to overcome its workings, or to be conqueror over it; but the purified and enlightened conscience will testify to the soul concerning the glorious Prince of Peace, who rules over all, and who can subdue all things to Himself. And as peace of conscience first comes in through the knowledge of Christ, so will it be maintained, in the same measure as the soul is enabled continually to come to Him, and to rest upon Him, for deliverance from sin in its power. And there is not an instance, in which

the believer is overtaken by sin, but he finds to be a time when, in practice, he had ceased to consider Christ, and to have his dependance upon Him. And if this be the case, as assuredly it is, so neither can he recover peace, till again he be brought to Christ, to have that believing view of Him in His glory, and grace, and power,—that view of Him in His reigning strength and authority, which will bring the soul still to place confidence in Him renewedly, as the Prince of Peace, who is willing to receive, to bless the soul,—to heal its backslidings, and to command spiritual blessings of His own purchase upon it, according to its need.

But we proceed to remark, in the last place, on this occasion, that this peace, of which the Lord Jesus is the Author and Sovereign, implies together with peace of conscience, peace among men, peace and harmony and good will, to abound more and more, among all those who receive the knowledge of Christ concerning which we have spoken. The treatment which Christ and His Gospel, and His people also, receive from the world, at the hands of the careless and unconverted is most unjust and unwise. They charge the Gospel with the short-comings of those who profess to receive and obey it. They incur a fearful reckoning against themselves, who thus deal with God, and with the kingdom of His Son upon earth. It is not to the measure of the Gos-

pel's power and influence which is seen exhibited by erring and fallible men, that you are individually called to look, but to the Gospel itself, and to Him who is its Author and Head, and who invites you to come unto Himself, and to learn of Him. We do admit, and most freely, that the sins and short-comings of those who profess to obey the Gospel are grievous, that they may and do form, sad stumbling-blocks in the way of awakened and inquiring minds, and that these shortcomings, and these offences which do come, are serious evils in a most painful and fearful degree: but still, that they should form to any rational mind a barrier of objection against the receiving and obeying of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, is as much guilt as it is folly, and chargeable upon those who thus excuse themselves for not giving heed to the Gospel's testimony, and not seeking the great salvation which it freely offers. It would be a more wise and a more rational course, to consider the measure of benefit which has come to the world, even in a temporal sense, by the measure in which the Gospel of Christ has been received, and its doctrines reduced to practice, by those who profess it. On this subject, however, for the present, we mean not to enter. But we would seek to address those who have experienced, in any measure, the truth of those observations which we have already submitted, with respect to the knowledge

of God in the soul, which the Gospel communicates, the knowledge of sin, which through its testimony is awakened in the conscience of those who truly receive it, and the knowledge of Christ through which the awakened conscience obtains peace: and it cannot but be experienced by you, that your whole safety and eternal well-being are dependant upon the grace and favour of God manifested toward you through Jesus Christ; and that the peace which you seek for in Christ, you know to proceed from that everlasting love as its source, which He manifested, as residing with Him, when you were at enmity with Him, and undeserving entirely of any thing better from His righteous hand than anger and wrath. You cannot but feel that the same evil passions which have had dominion over you, and which led you to trample upon His divine authority, were also the means of setting you at variance with the true interests and the peace of your brethren around you on earth; that inordinate attachment to earthly objects, which excludes God and eternal things from the mind, had mastery over you, in preferring your own interests to those of others around you, your own name and your own reputation to those of your brethren; and that, however unobserved, perhaps, by the world, all this may have been, it prevented you from cherishing towards your fellow-creatures that desire for their

actual good, those honest and earnest wishes and efforts for their well-being which are the fulfilment of the law of Christ, even with respect to the life that now is, and all its interests: and as for the life to come, while you remained ignorant of God, and careless of His glory, you cared not for the spiritual and eternal interests of others at all, they gave you no concern and no thought whatever at heart. People may speak of certain individual acts which disturb the peace and good-will that ought to reign among men; they may fix upon such acts the seal of their reprobation; and far be it from us to deny, that too frequent opportunity is given, even by those who profess godliness, for such reproofs and censures: but the great cause from which proceed the animosities and wrongs which harass and deface the moral order and beauty of life, which destroy the peace of society, which alienate man from man, and turn them into mutual enemies, is, that ignorance of God which reigns in the carnal mind, that enmity against His government and will, which reigns predominant in the heart unrenewed. And never shall universal peace and good-will prevail among the individuals and families and communities of men on the earth, till "The Prince of Peace" receive universal homage from all.

THE END.

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